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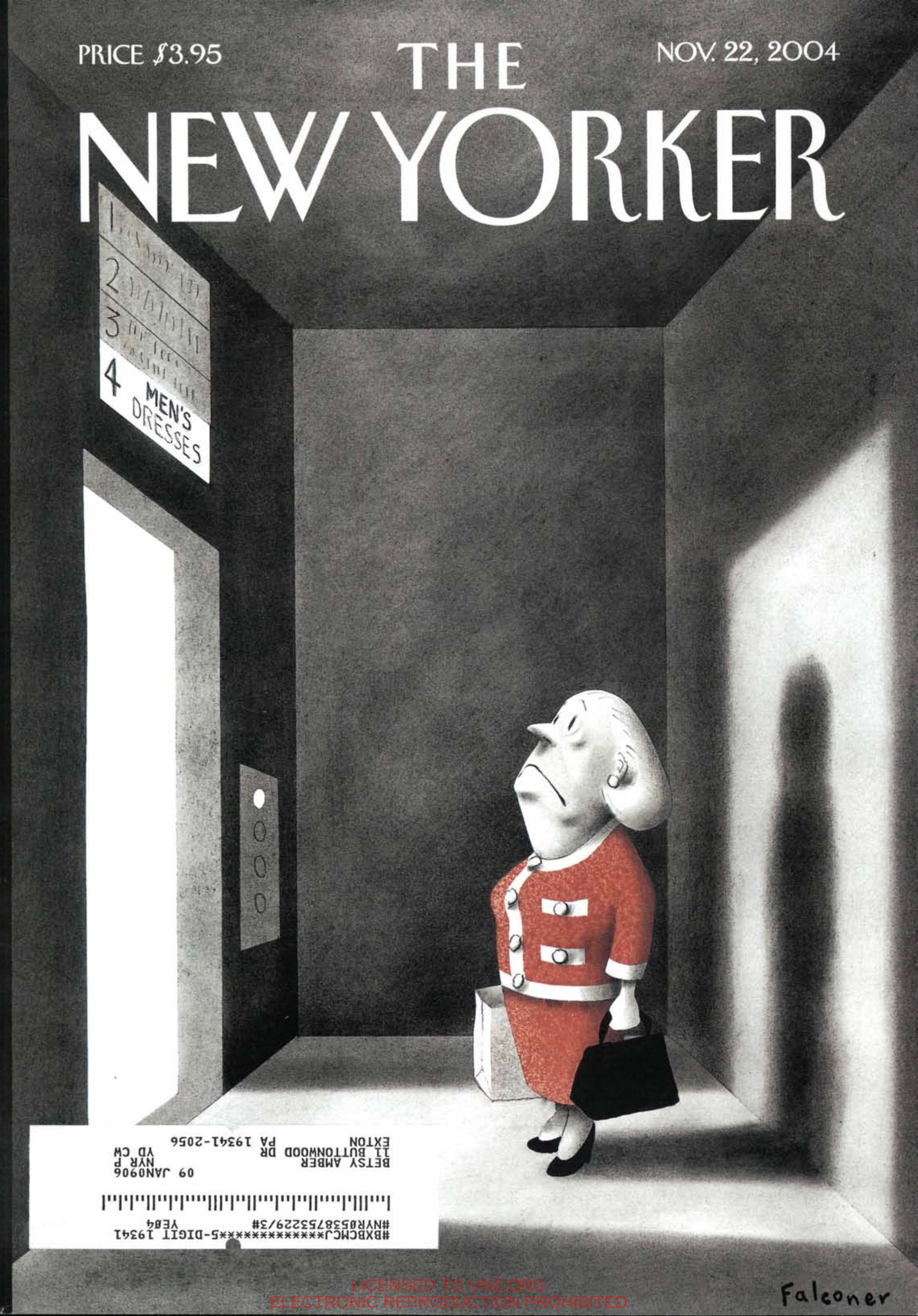
THE NEW YORKER

NOV. 22, 2004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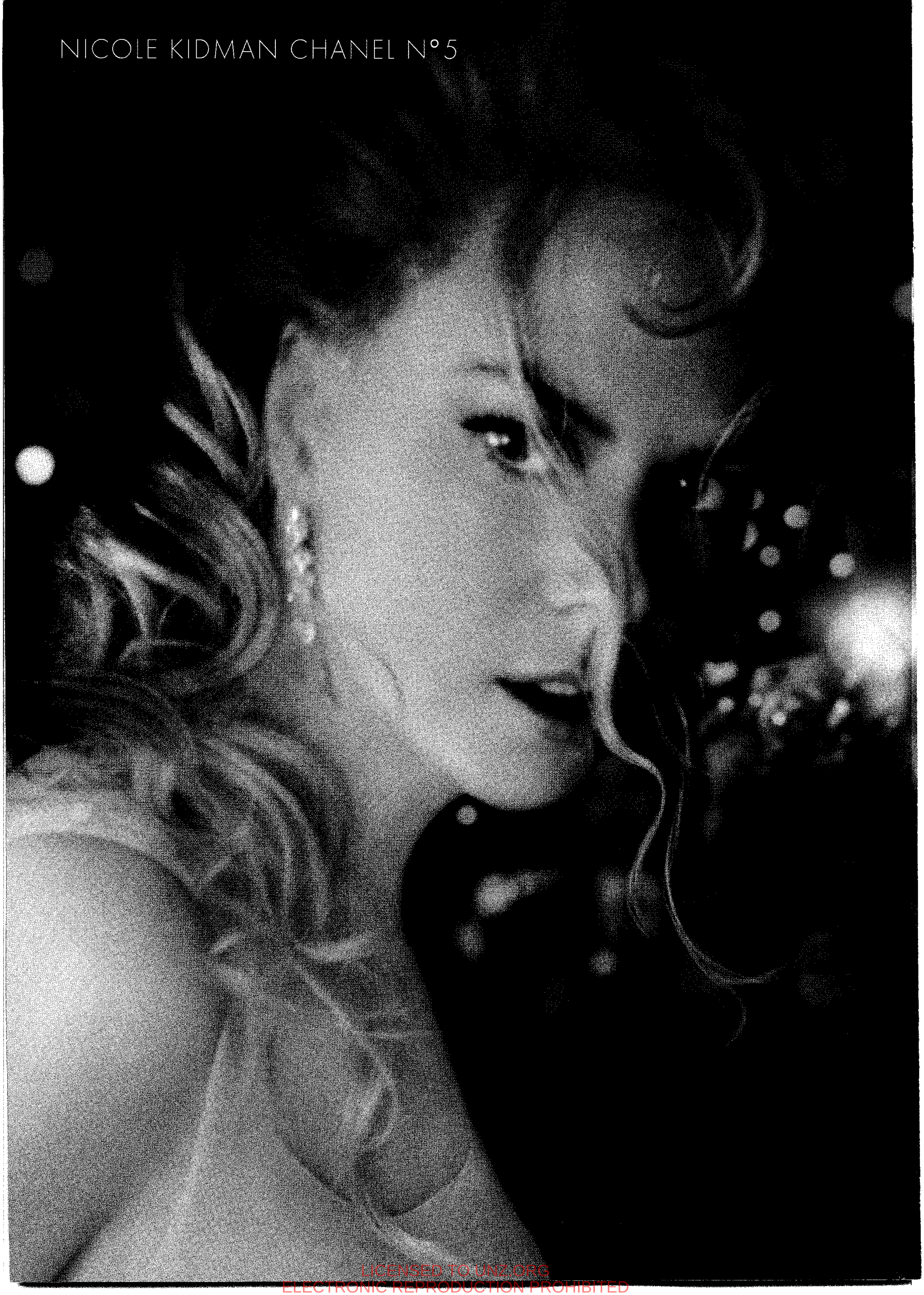
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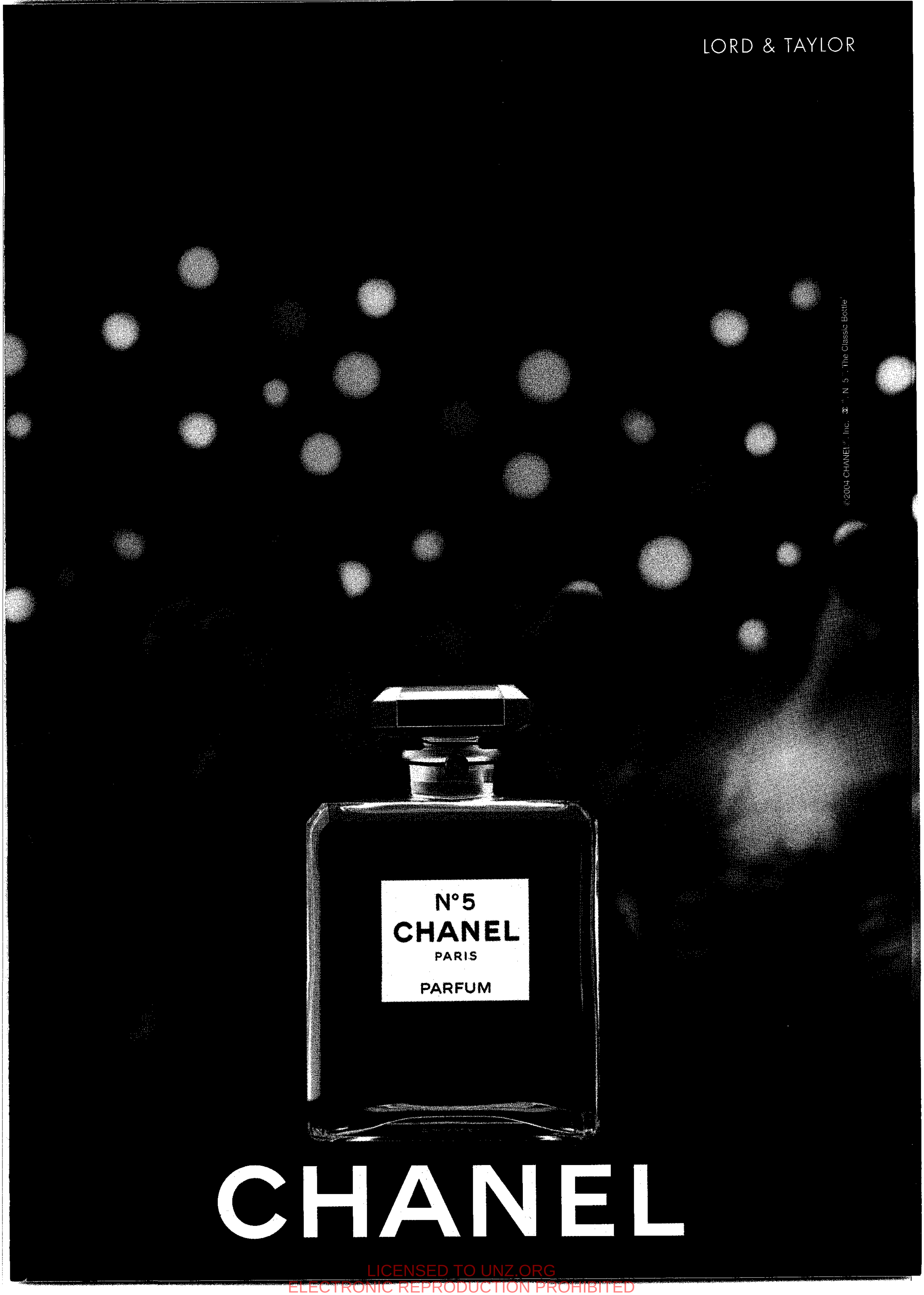
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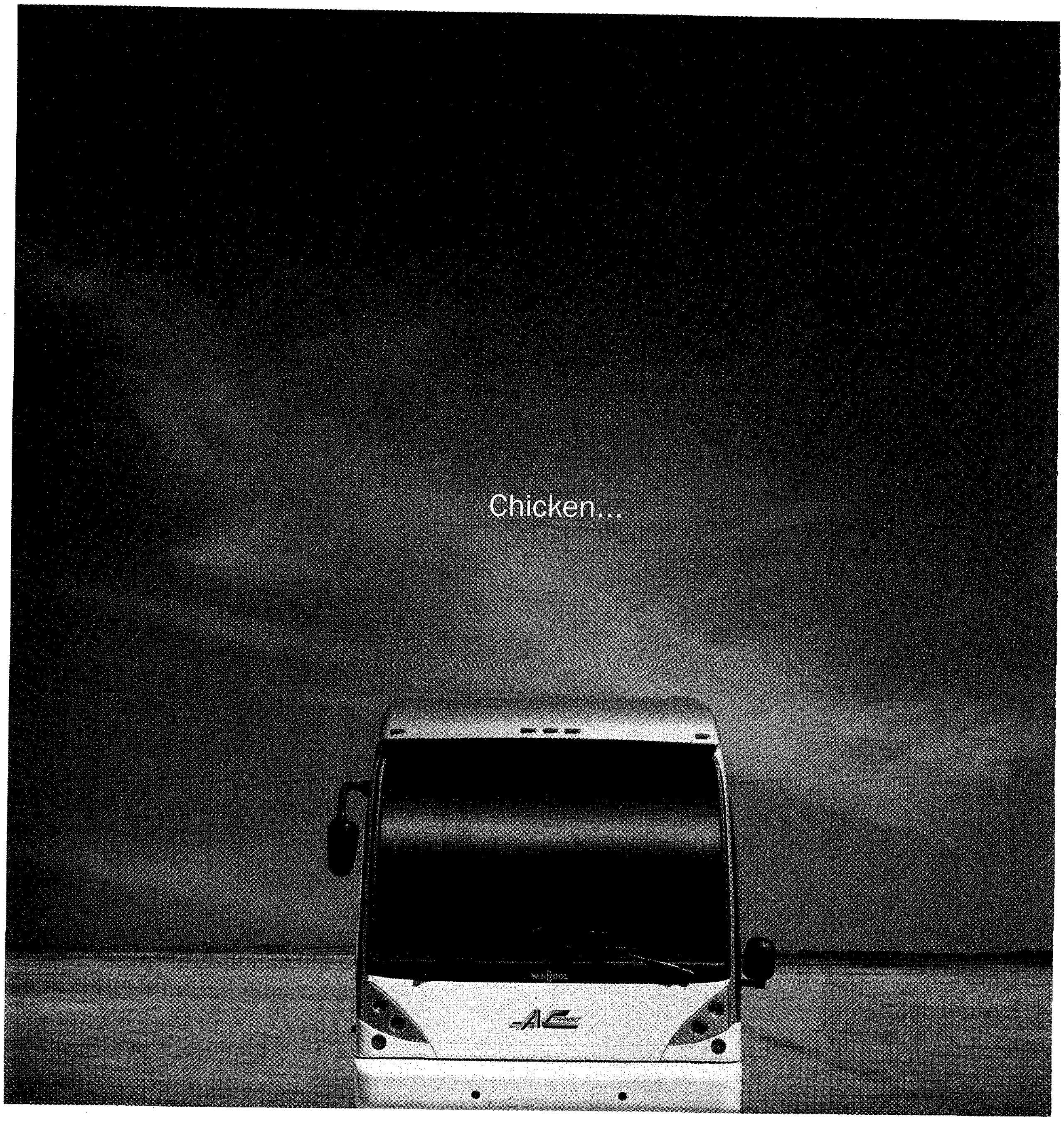

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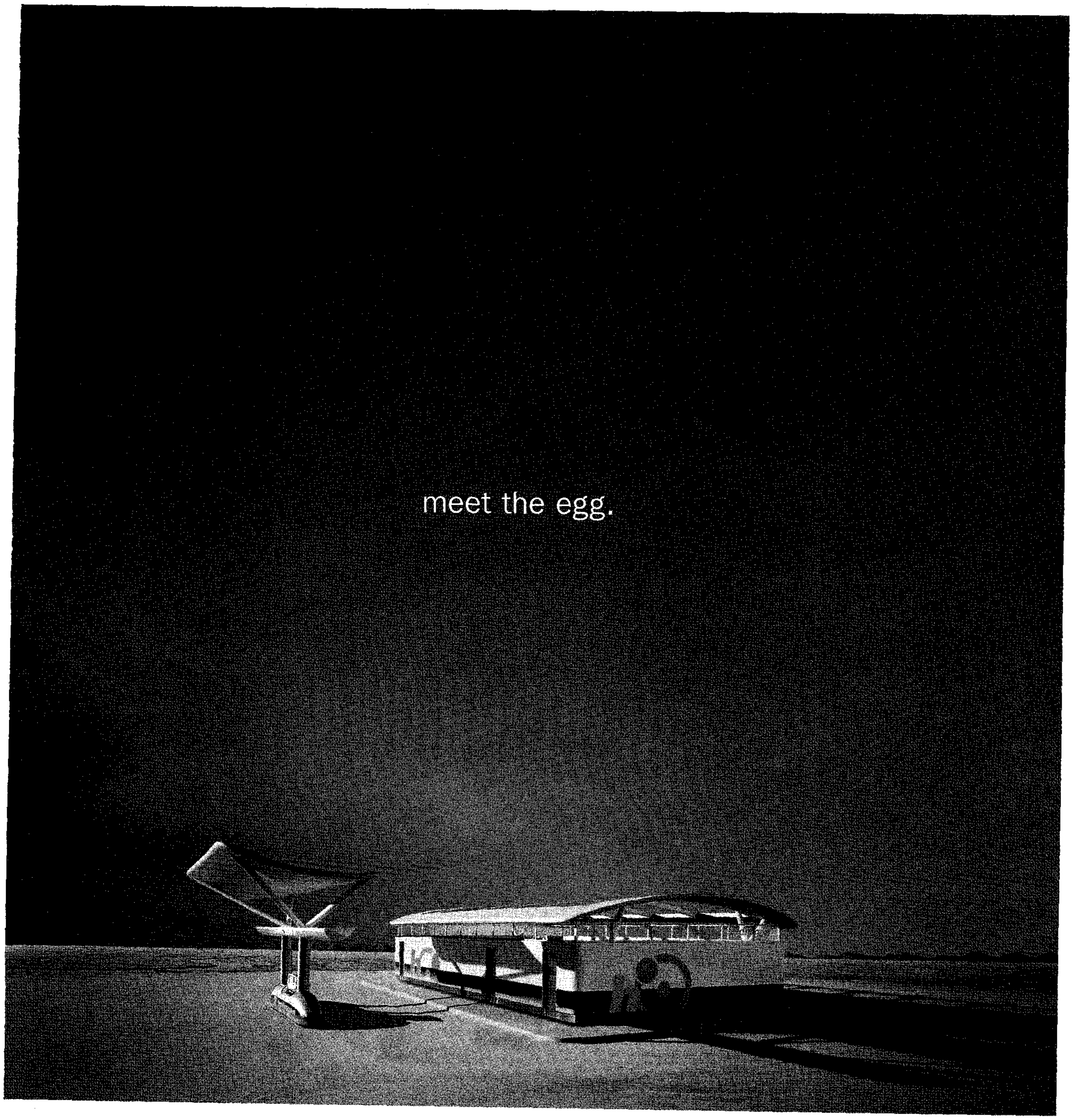

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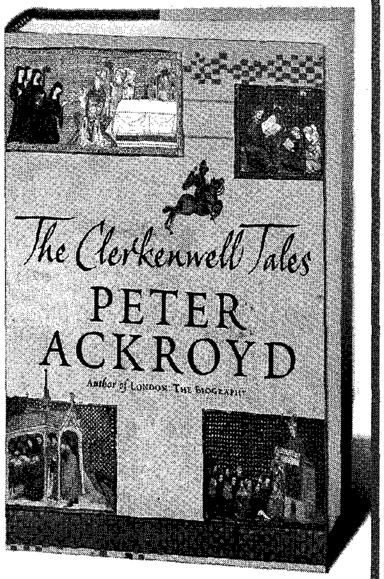

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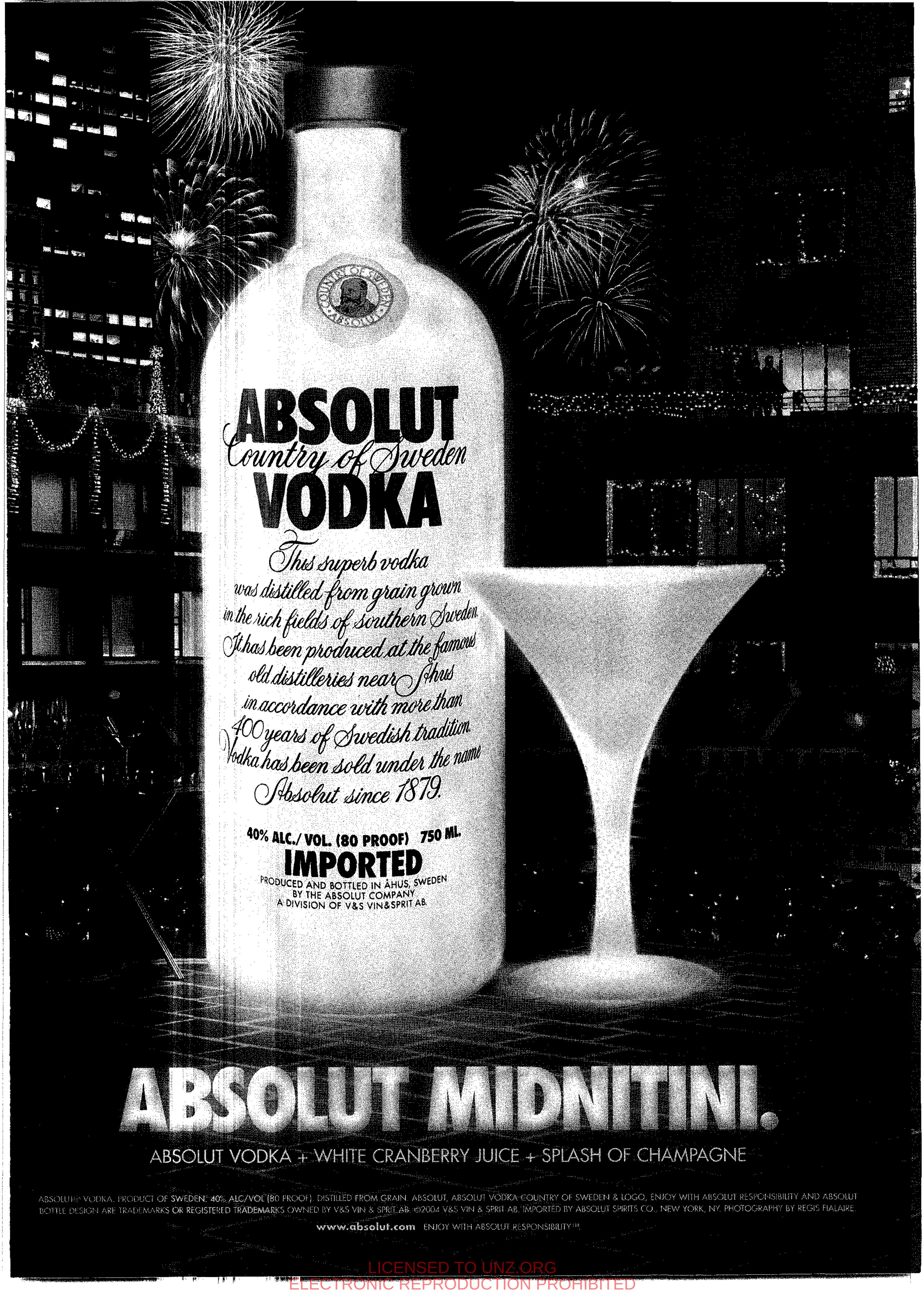
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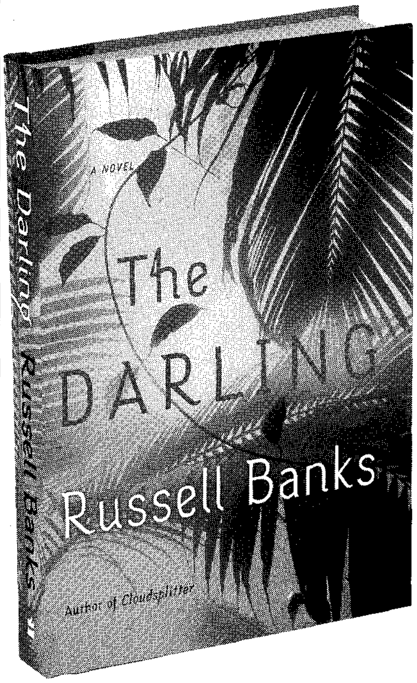

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CONTRIBUTORS

Jane Kramer ("Taking the Veil," p. 58) writes the Letter from Europe for the magazine. Her recent books include "The Politics of Memory" and "Lone Patriot."

Malcolm Gladwell ("Something Borrowed," p. 40) is a staff writer and the author of "Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking," which will be published in January.

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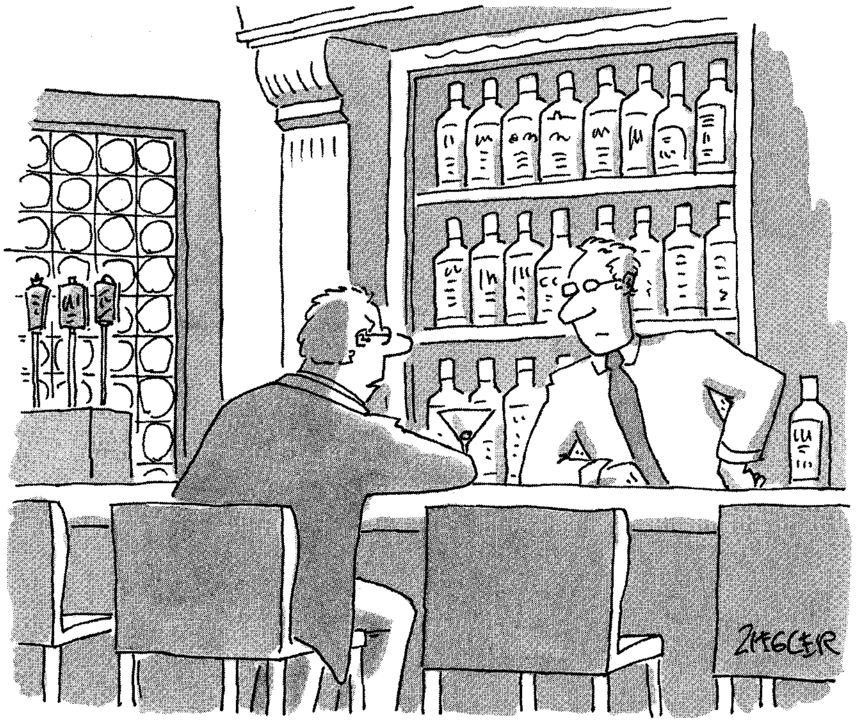
W. S. Merwin (Poem, p. 86), a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, is the recipient of the Lannan Foundation's 2004 Lifetime Achievement Award.

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 84) is a film critic for the magazine. His most recent book is "American Sucker."

Adam Kirsch (Books, p. 94) is the book critic of the New York *Sun.* "The Wounded Surgeon," his study of postwar American poetry, will be published in the spring.

Anthony Lane (A Critic at Large, p. 98) is the author of "Nobody's Perfect: Writings from *The New Yorker.*"

Bruce McCall (The Back Page, p. 108) will have an exhibit of his art work at the James Goodman Gallery, in New York, in April. ♦



"I guess we'll all just have to vote a little bit harder next time."

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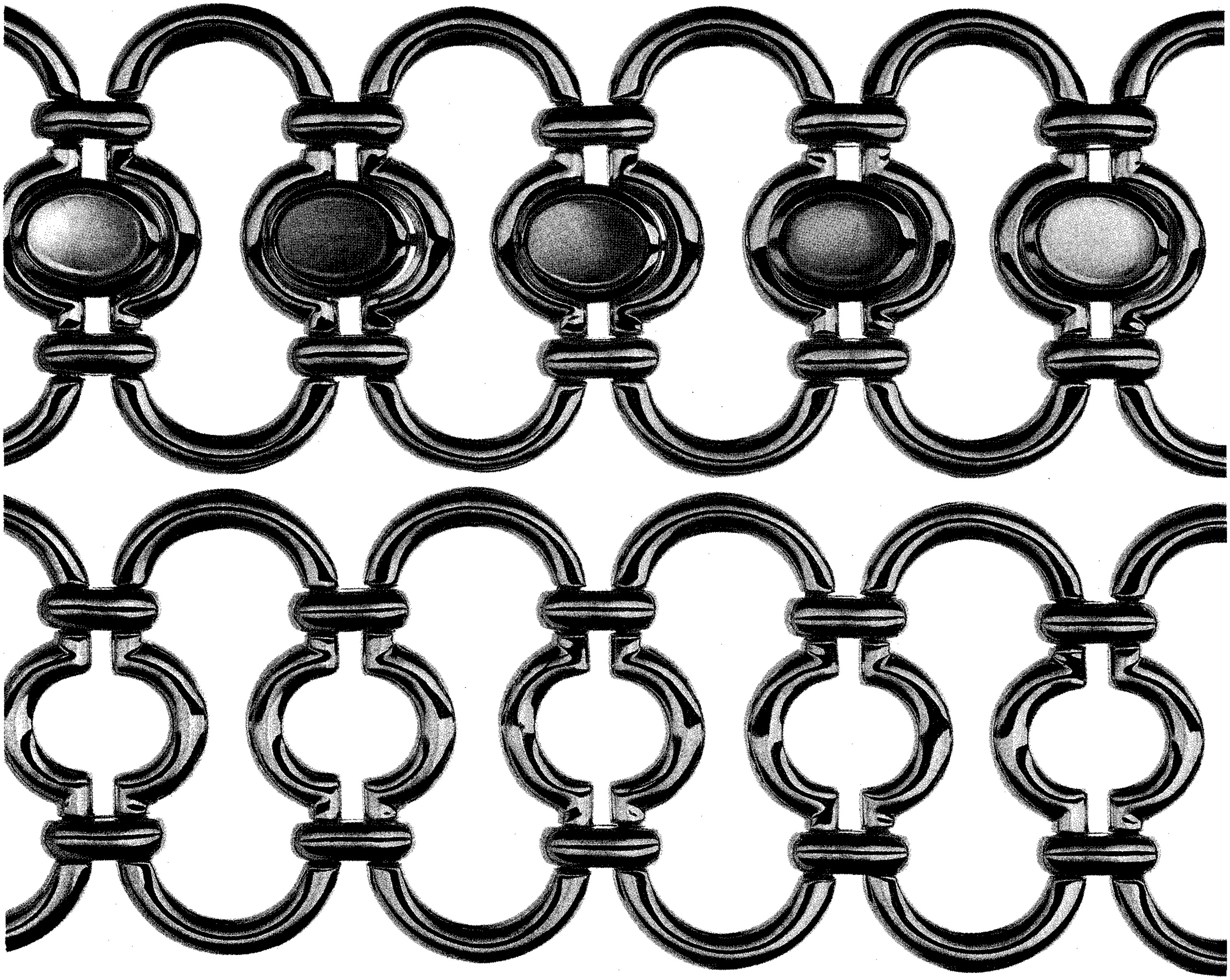
Paloma Picasso



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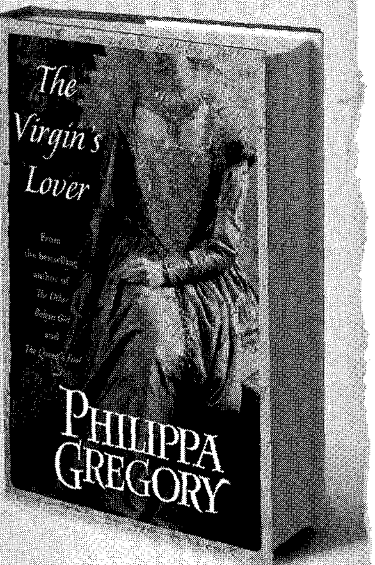

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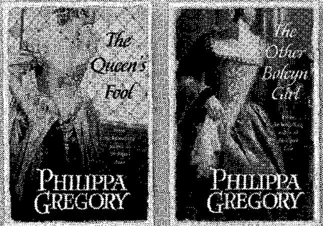

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BITTER PILLS

Malcolm Gladwell, in his discussion of my book, "The Truth About the Drug Companies," works hard to excuse the pharmaceutical industry from bearing the responsibility for rising drug costs, and ignores its incessant promotion of new, high-priced "me-too" drugs in the absence of evidence that they are better than older, cheaper ones (A Critic at Large, October 25th). He seems to believe that greater use of newer drugs is, on the face of it, a good thing, but often it is not. Prices don't, as a rule, drop in response to new drugs entering the market; nor are these drugs promoted as cheaper alternatives. Gladwell pins his hopes for controlling costs on Pharmacy Benefit Managers, but experience shows that they have often been more beholden to the pharmaceutical industry than to their clients, and they have not noticeably stopped the rapid rise in drug expenditures. I'm also at a loss to know why Gladwell is so exercised by the Pravachol study accepted by *The New England Journal of Medicine* under my editorship. The results were clearly stated, and it is not the editors' fault that they were not more definitive. Gladwell may wish that we had chosen to write an editorial about cost-effectiveness, but that hardly warrants his tone of moral outrage.

Marcia Angell
Senior Lecturer, Harvard Medical School
Cambridge, Mass.

Gladwell's article raises the important issue of personal, as well as corporate, responsibility for the crisis in health-care costs. Citizens can hardly expect to have preventable conditions like obesity and stress cured for them via a capsule without paying for it. The pharmaceutical industry is certainly guilty of inappropriate advertising and heavy manipulation of patent law. Ignoring the role of customer demand, however, won't bring us any closer to reducing medical inflation.

Melissa Quaal
Highland Park, N.J.

Gladwell tries to convince us that the problem is not so much the prices being charged by drug companies as the volume of drugs prescribed by physicians and the irrational expectations of consumers. This is partially true, but one can't so easily absolve the drug companies. Consider four points: one, drug companies frequently file appeals to block or delay generics once the brand patent has expired, often getting two to three more years of exclusive sale and pricing; two, drug companies spend billions of dollars in advertising to the public to drive the demand that Gladwell derides; three, drug companies spend billions more in marketing, free samples, and other promotions to doctors; and, four, drug companies now fund much of the research that generates articles favorable to their drugs, and block unfavorable articles. Yes, physicians and the public are complicit, but drug manufacturers are the most powerful force in the drug-cost problem.

Albert Martin
Senior Fellow, Center for the Health Professions, University of California
San Francisco, Calif.

Gladwell places the real responsibility for the high cost of prescription drugs on doctors and patients—in effect, blaming the victims. Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical industry is among the most profitable in the country; it holds sway at every stage of the dissemination of medical information, from medical school to continuing education and the bombardment of physicians with gifts; and it blankets the media with direct-to-consumer advertising. It's time that our legislators made some effort to rein it in.

Marvin M. Lipman
Chief Medical Adviser, Consumers Union
Yonkers, N.Y.

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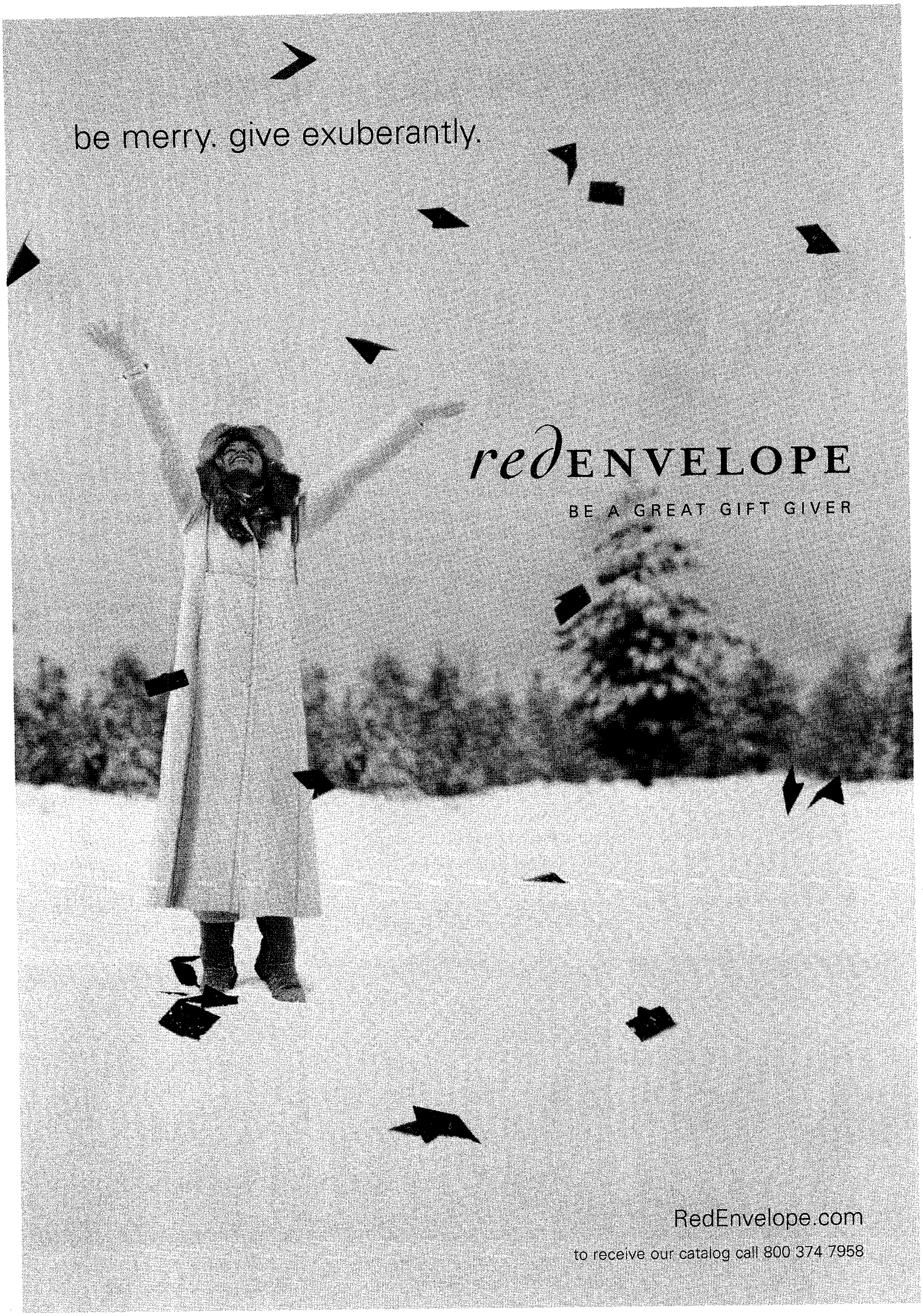
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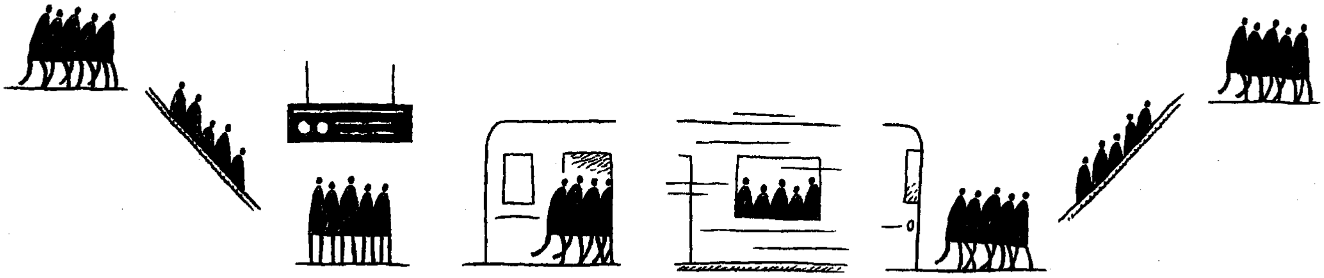

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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK

STRING THEORIST

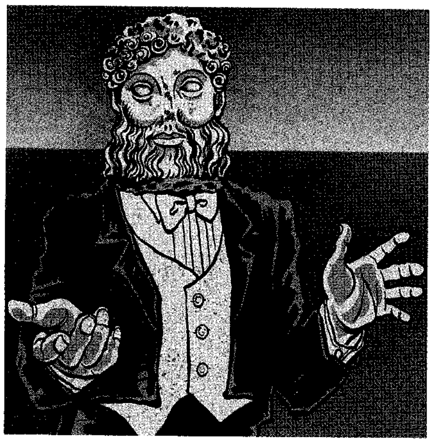
The artist Fred Sandback makes the most of colored acrylic yarn, using it to frame empty planes and to delineate distances between walls, floors, and ceilings. The results are startlingly concrete—it feels almost dangerous to put a hand into one of his forms—and sparely elegant. Sandback designed a series of pieces for a show at the Margarete Roeder gallery in 2001, but only one was shown at that time. Now, three of them, all floor-to-ceiling works in taut black yarn planted flush against the wall, are being exhibited in two-week shifts, beginning Nov. 9 and ending Dec. 22. Early pieces by Neil Jenney, Blinky Palermo, and Richard Tuttle will also be on view. (Roeder; see Art.)

LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER

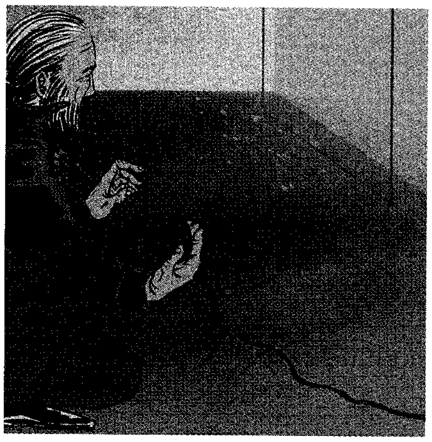
Four years ago, the bossa-nova singer Bebel Gilberto enlisted trendy producers such as Amon Tobin and the Thievery Corporation for her first album, "Tanto Tempo," which added contemporary beats and electronic effects to the timeless style that her father, João, popularized nearly half a century ago. On her latest album, she returns to a more traditional, acoustic sound; this week, she'll perform it here for the first time, at Town Hall (she was scheduled to play Central Park this summer, but that show was rained out). (Nov. 17; see Night Life.)

ALL GREEK

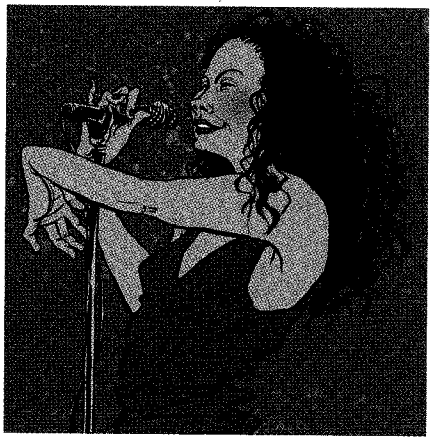
This year, the New York Festival of Song—founded in 1988 by Steven Blier and Michael Barrett—offers music by and about the people of Greece, ranging from the sensuous (Ravel's "Five Greek Folk Songs") to the serious (lieder by Schubert and Wolf), along with a large selection of Greek art songs and the world première of "Penelope," a cycle by John Musto. Throughout the festival, Blier, Michael Barrett, and the bouzouki player Kostas Psarros accompany the soprano Amy Burton and the tenor Dimitri Pittas. (Merkin Concert Hall, Nov. 17; see Classical Music.)



Songs about and by Greeks, at the New York Festival of Song.

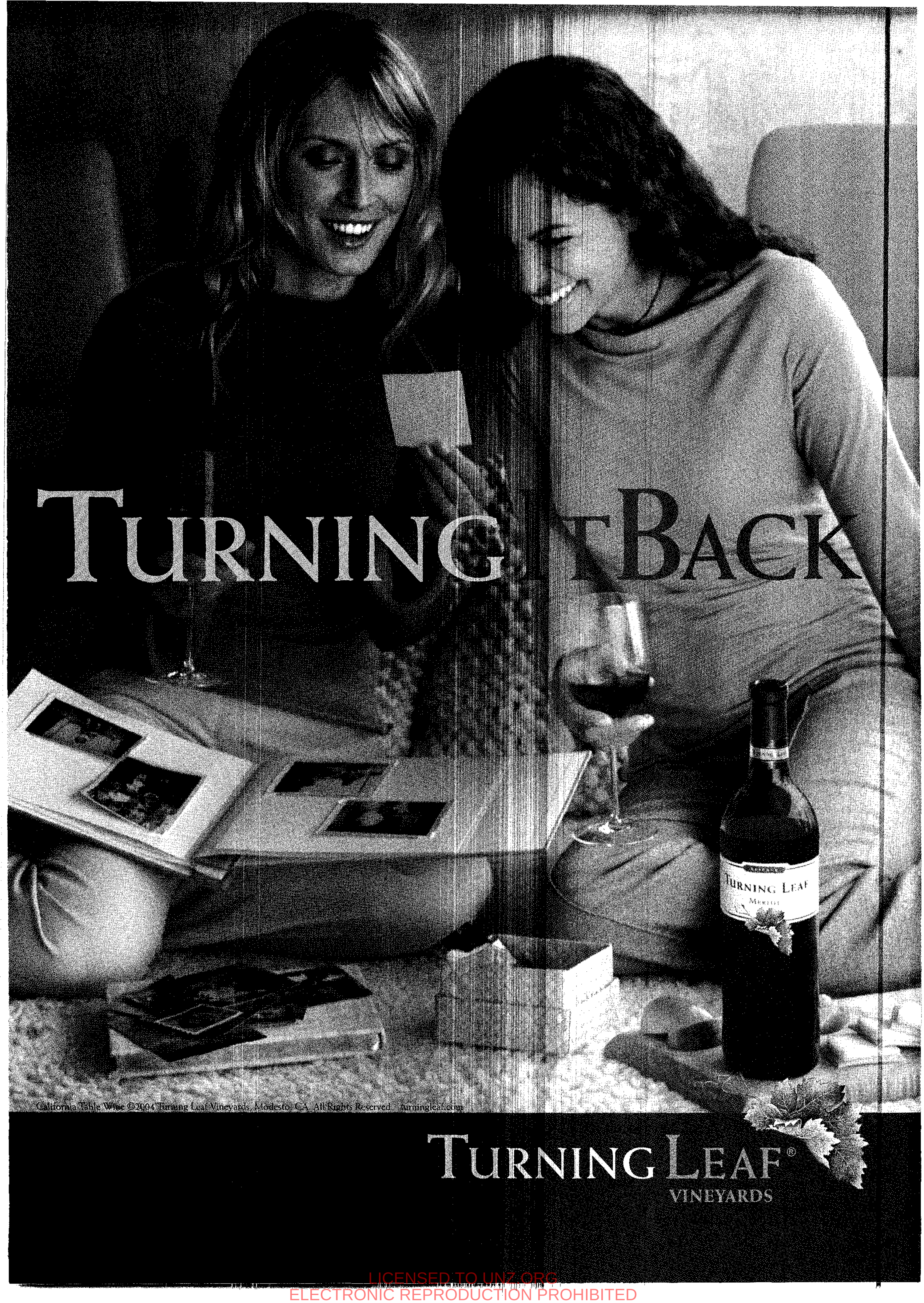


Fred Sandback's yarn sculpture is on display at the Roeder gallery.



The Brazilian singer and songwriter Bebel Gilberto, at Town Hall.

YUKO SHIMIZU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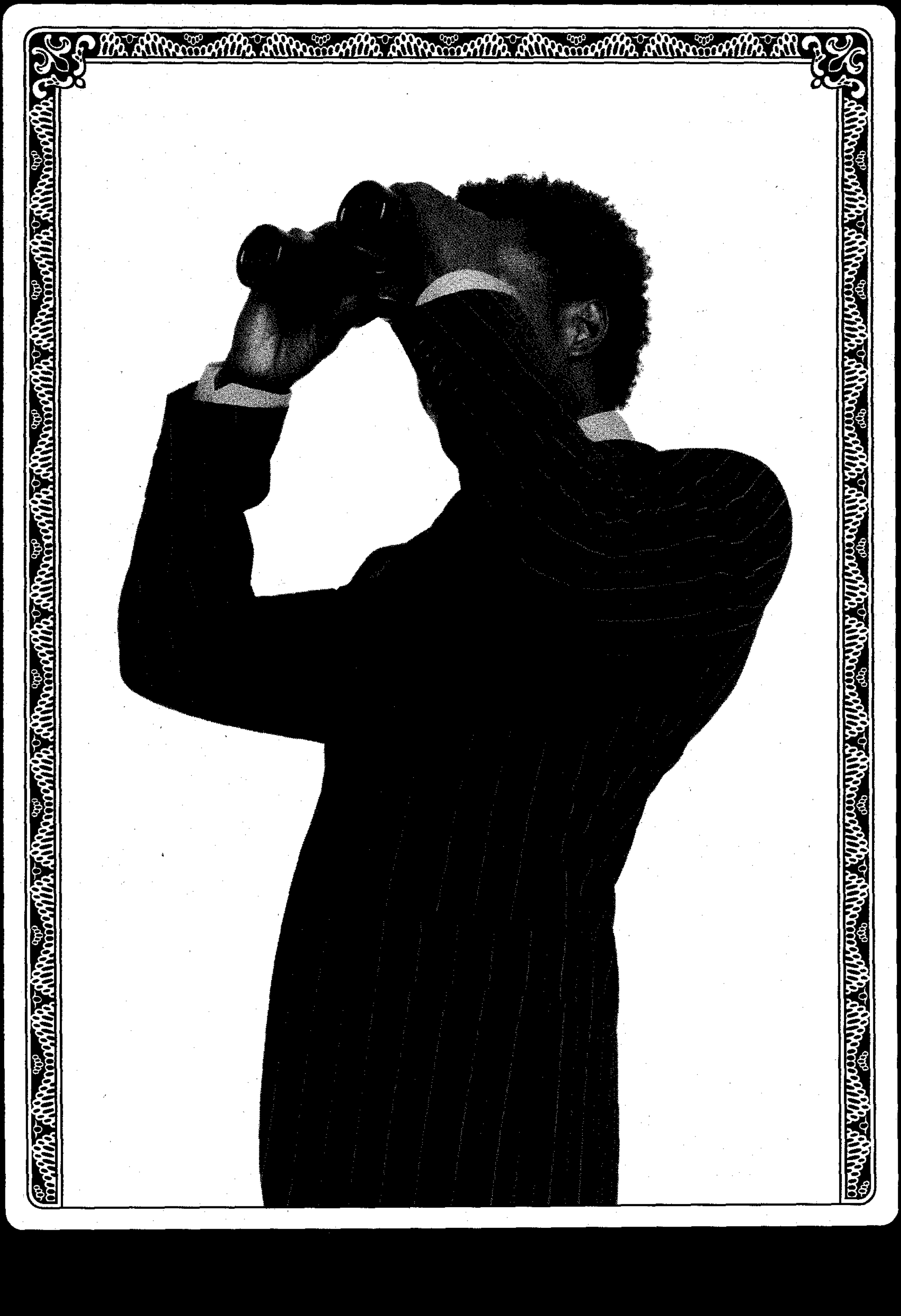

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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BELLE ÉPOQUE
A new work by Martha Clarke and Charles L. Mee imagines the life of Toulouse-Lautrec (Mark Povinelli) at the Moulin Rouge. Directed by Clarke. In previews. Opens Nov. 21 at 6:45. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

LA CAGE AUX FOLLES
A revival of Jerry Herman and Harvey Fierstein's wacky musical about a gay couple who disguise themselves as husband and wife. Gary Beach and Daniel Davis lead the cast. Directed by Jerry Zaks. In previews. (Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 212-307-4100.)

Las Rubias del Norte comes to BAM Café for a show on Nov. 19 (see Night Life).

DAME EDNA: BACK WITH A VENGEANCE!
The vivacious and vicious Australian housewife and talk-show host (a.k.a. Barry Humphries) presents a new show that includes psychic readings of audience members. In previews. Opens Nov. 21 at 6:30. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DEMOCRACY
Michael Frayn's hit London play about Willy Brandt comes to Broadway. James Naughton and Richard Thomas lead the cast. Directed by Michael Blakemore. Two previews on Nov. 17. Opens Nov. 18 at 6:30. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

DOUBT
In a new play by John Patrick Shanley, set in the nineteen-sixties at a Catholic school in the Bronx, a nun (Cherry Jones) worries that a priest (Brían F. O'Byrne) is too close to a male student. Directed by Doug Hughes. In previews. Opens Nov. 23 at 6:45. (Manhattan Theatre Club at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

FAUST/HOW I ROSE
The U.S. première of a collaboration between the New York-based playwright and multimedia artist John Jesurun and Martín Acosta, the director of Mexico's Teatro de Arena. Nov. 16-20, with a Spanish-only performance on Nov. 17. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

MARRIAGE
The Pearl Theatre Company presents Gogol's rarely performed 1833 play about a woman who is wooed by four suitors. Directed by Jesse Berger. (The show runs in repertory with "The Imaginary Invalid.") In previews. Opens Nov. 21 at 7. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

A NUMBER
Sam Shepard stars in Caryl Churchill's new play about the moral repercussions of human cloning. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

PACIFIC OVERTURES
B. D. Wong stars in the Roundabout's revival of the 1976 Sondheim musical (book by John Weidman) about the impact American culture has had on Japanese society since Commodore Perry landed in Japan in 1853. Directed by Amon Miyamoto. In previews. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

A SECOND HAND MEMORY
A new play written and directed by Woody Allen is set in Brooklyn in the nineteen-fifties and stars Dominic Chianese, Beth Fowler, Elizabeth Marvel, and others. In previews. Opens Nov. 22 at 7. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE SECRET AGENT
David Willinger's adaptation of Conrad's novel about terrorism moves the action from London a hundred years ago to New York after 9/11. Opens Nov. 18 at 8. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-254-1109.)

700 SUNDAYS
Billy Crystal makes his Broadway début in a play about his life. Written by Crystal, with additional material by Alan Zweibel. Directed by Des McAnuff. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

WHOOPI
Whoopi Goldberg returns to Broadway with a new production of the show that launched her career. Opens Nov. 17 at 6:45. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BROOKLYN: THE MUSICAL
This mishmash of Horatio Alger and "Star Search" tells the improbable tale of a Parisian orphan named Brooklyn who comes to New York (speaking Brooklynese, not French) on a quest for fame and the father she never knew and is welcomed by the

LISA KERESZI

city's homeless population. Directed by Jeff Calhoun. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DANNY AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA
John Patrick Shanley's 1984 play, now in revival at Second Stage, is a short, sweet evocation of the pain that comes from feeling disconnected from other people, and the pain that comes with making a genuine connection. Two angry people, a despairing woman (Rosemarie DeWitt) and a confused man (Adam Rothenberg), meet in a bar, share their deepest secrets, and then try to figure out how to cope with the fact that they care about each other. Well played by the actors, who bring across their characters' humor and fragility. Directed by Leigh Silverman. (307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

DEATH AND THE PLOUGHMAN
Anne Bogart and her SITI Company open Classic Stage's season with a production of the medieval play (written by Johann von Saaz in 1401), in which a bereaved farmer confronts Death. Translated by Michael West. (136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

DIMPHO DI KOPANE
The South African lyric-theatre company—whose name means "combined talents" in Sotho—makes its New York début with four repertory productions. (Synod Hall, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 212-581-1212. Through Nov. 28.)

EVE-OLUTION
A play by Hilary Illick and Jennifer Krier (based on their experiences) interweaves the stories of two women who are struggling to retain their sense of self while raising a family. This show knows its audience; it has no surprises, but plenty of heart. Directed by Carolyn Cantor. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 212-239-6200.)

FIVE BY TENN
Manhattan Theatre Club presents four newly discovered one-act plays by Tennessee Williams, along with "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow," in a production that stars Kathleen Chalfant. Michael Kahn directs. (Reviewed in this issue.) (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE FOREIGNER
Larry Shue's chestnut about a shy Brit named Charlie who spends three days in a hillbilly hideaway is given delirious life by the physical clowning of Matthew Broderick (as Charlie), by Byron Jennings, as his chum "Froggy" LeSueur (in kneesocks and khaki shorts), and especially by Kevin Cahoon, as a half-wit named Ellard, whose goggle-eyed loopiness gives Don Knotts a run for his money. Cahoon and Broderick make a splendid comedy team, and their antics (such as a post-breakfast dance in which they use juice cups as fezzes) set the audience howling. With fine performances also by Frances Sternhagen and Mary Catherine Garrison. Directed by Scott Schwartz. (Roundabout at Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

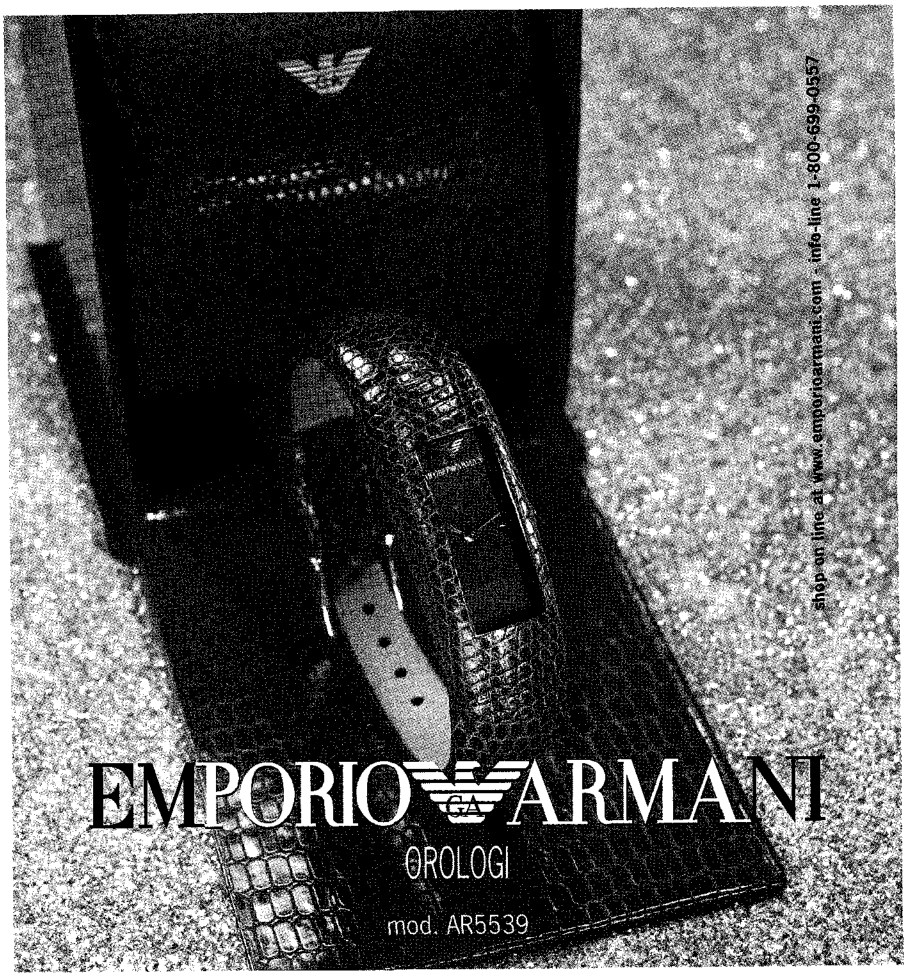
THE GOD OF HELL
In a play by Sam Shepard inspired by the Bush Administration, an evil government official harasses a Midwestern farm couple. Directed by Lou Jacob. (Actors Studio Drama School Theatre, 151 Bank St. 212-279-4200.)

THE GOOD BODY
Eve Ensler follows up "The Vagina Monologues" with a play about women's body-image issues. Directed by Peter Askin. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

GUANTÁNAMO:
HONOR BOUND TO DEFEND FREEDOM
A verbatim-theatre piece—in the style of "The Exonerated"—that mingles interviews of detainees at Guantánamo Bay with letters, transcripts of political speeches, and lawyers' briefs. Written by Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo. Directed by Nicolas Kent and Sacha Wares. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

HELL MEETS HENRY HALFWAY
An arresting, inventive production by Philadelphia's Pig Iron Theatre Company, who bring their expressive physical humor to Adriano Shaplin's witty adaptation of Witold Gombrowicz's gothic novel, "Possessed." (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444. Through Nov. 21.)

'NIGHT, MOTHER
Brenda Blethyn and Edie Falco star in a revival of Marsha Norman's 1983 play about a mother



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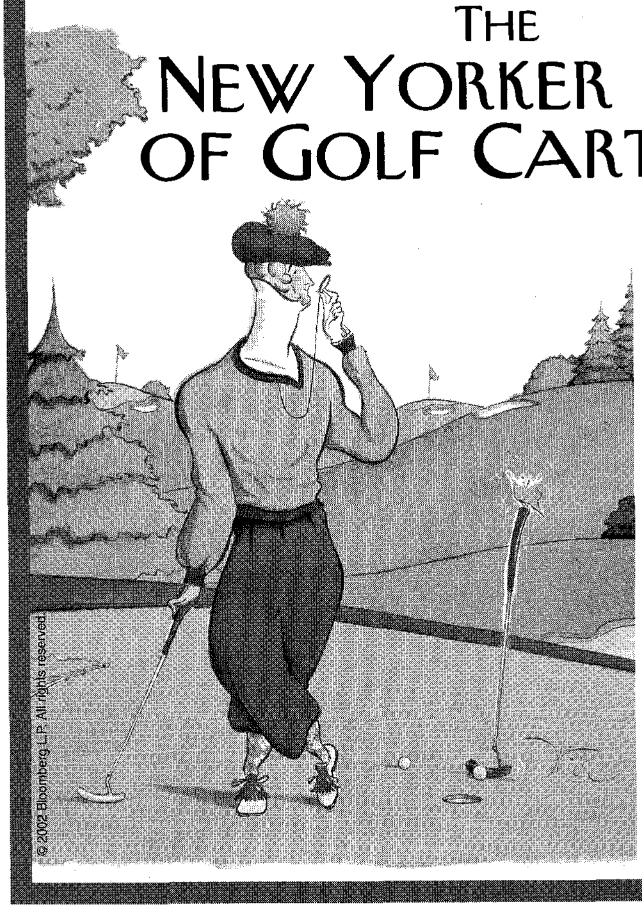
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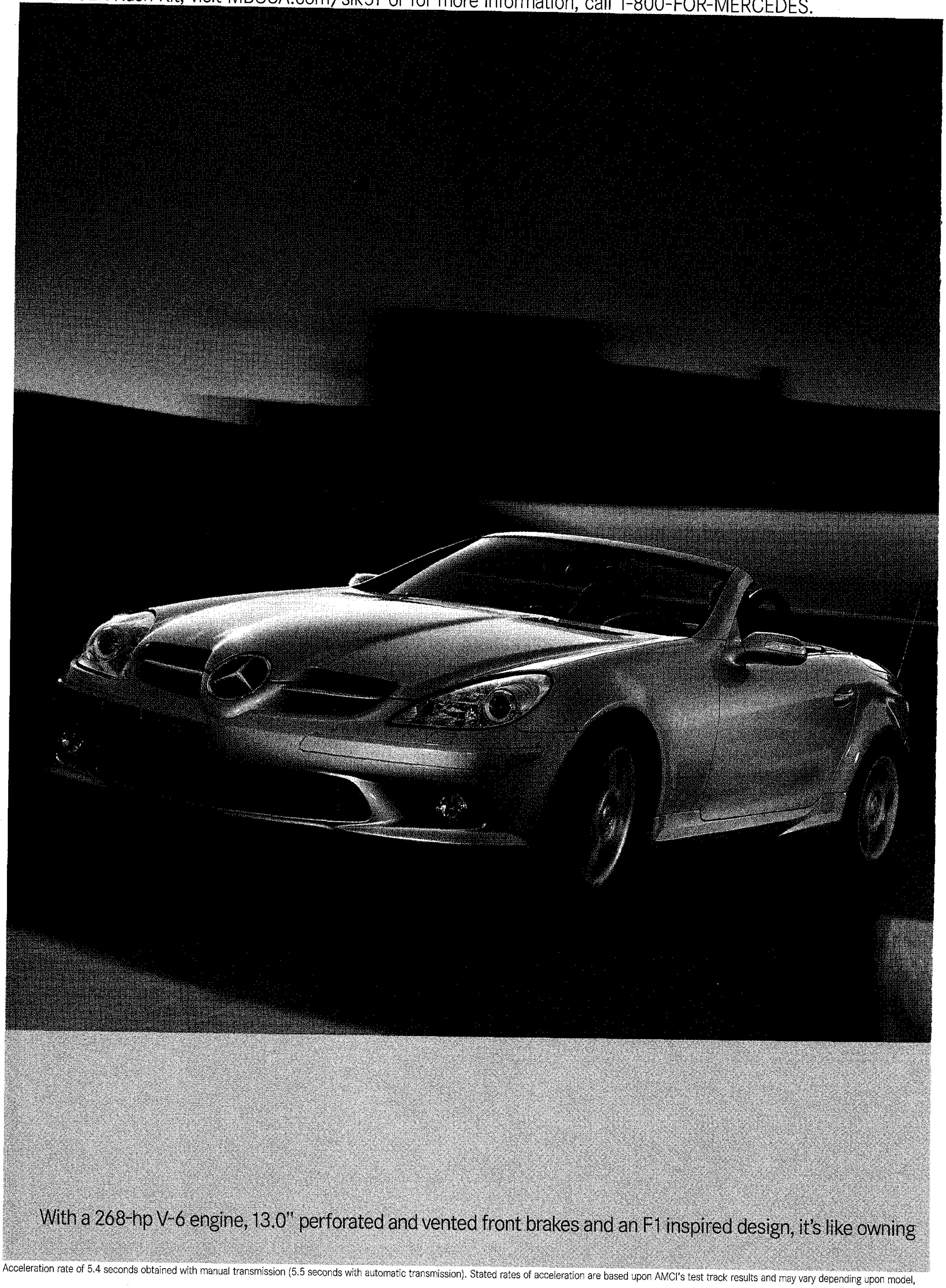
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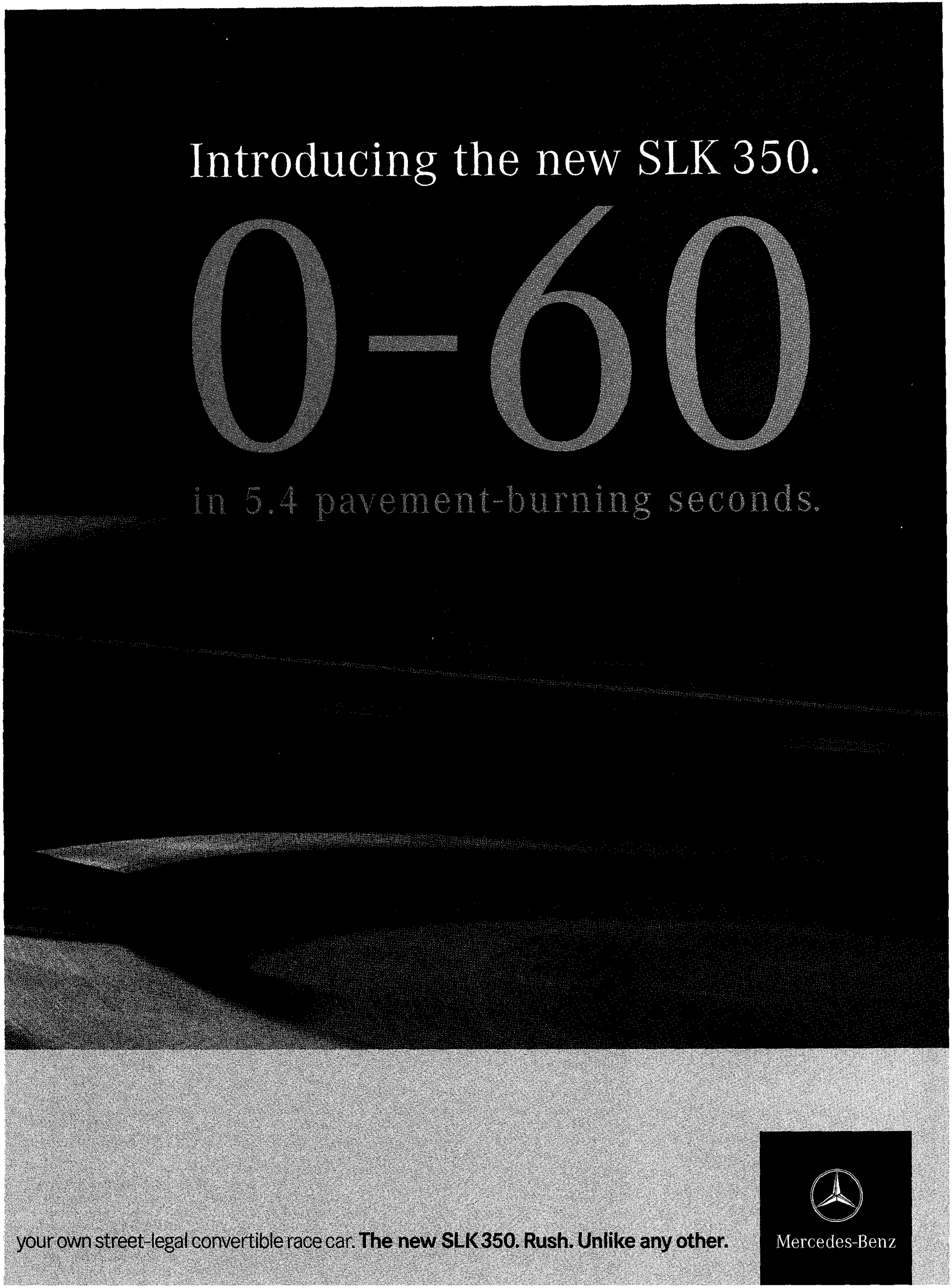

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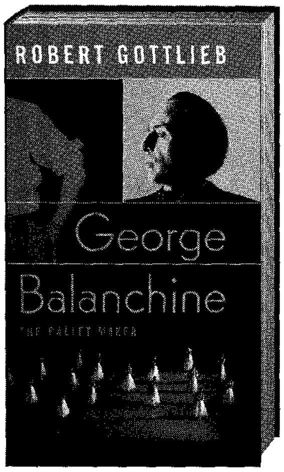
Robert Gottlieb on
GEORGE BALANCHINE



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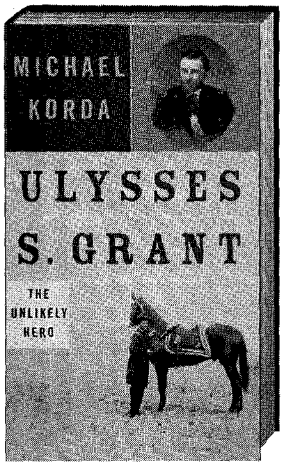
—*Los Angeles Times*

Michael Korda on
ULYSSES S. GRANT



"As a biographer Korda is Grant-like himself: unambiguous, decisive, clear. The book is a joy to read."
— Larry McMurtry, Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for *Lonesome Dove*

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ATLAS BOOKS

and her suicidal daughter. Directed by Michael Mayer. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

9 PARTS OF DESIRE
Heather Raffo's remarkable one-woman show, which bears witness to Iraqi women's political oppression, is an example of how art can remake the world and eloquently name pain. Based on research and dozens of interviews conducted on four continents over eleven years (Raffo portrays nine women in the course of the evening), the play brings news of the psychic life of the brutalized and allows us to think about the unthinkable. Directed by Joanna Settle. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/8/04.) (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.)

PEOPLE ARE WRONG!
This addled rock-and-folk musical, set on a stage covered in Astro-Turf, resembles a seventies-themed backyard party with way too many hash brownies going around. Yuppies (John Flansburgh and Erin Hill) buy a country house, and freak out when their gardener, a Jesus Christ Superstar manqué named Xanthus (David Driver), turns their lawn into a launchpad for his spaceship. Fitfully directed by David Herskovits. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

PONIES
In Mike Batistick's brisk drama—which features two actors from "The Sopranos," Michael Imperioli and John Ventimiglia—a seedy Lower East Side Off-Track Betting center is the most hopeful place in New York. Ventimiglia is superb as Drazen, a hotheaded Croatian émigré who befriends a Nigerian-born livery-cab driver named Ken (Babs Olusanmokun). Imperioli plays an illegal immigrant named Wallace, a minor character who gets major laughs. Directed by Nick Sandow. (Studio Dante, 257 W. 29th St. 212-279-4200. Through Nov. 20.)

PUGILIST SPECIALIST
The Riot Group's psychological drama about four U.S. marines on a tense mission in the Middle East comes to 45 Below, the downstairs stage at 45 Bleecker St. Written by Adriano Shaplin. (212-352-3101. Through Nov. 28.)

RISK EVERYTHING
The Polish director Grzegorz Jarzyna brings his company, TR Warszawa, to St. Ann's Warehouse, with its production of George F. Walker's louche urban suspense drama. In Polish, with English supertitles. (38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. Through Nov. 21.)

SAILOR'S SONG
John Patrick Shanley's latest. As in "Danny and the Deep Blue Sea" (see above), Shanley tries to examine why love so often fails. A cast of five, all gifted at evoking emotional nuance, interconnect in a seaside town, but end up learning nothing from each other. With lovely dance sequences choreographed by Barry McNabb. Directed by Chris McGarry. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

ŠVEJK
Colin Teevan's satire is based on Jaroslav Hašek's 1923 story about a village idiot who fights in the First World War. With original music by Lenny Pickett, the music director of "Saturday Night Live," and lyrics by Teevan. Directed by Dalia Ibelhauptaite. (Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE TALK OF THE TOWN
The Peccadillo Theatre Company presents a new musical about Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, Alexander Woolcott, and other Algonquin regulars. Book, lyrics, and music by Ginny Redington and Tom Dawes. Directed by Dan Wackerman. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-868-4444. Through Nov. 28.)

TRYING
In a touching, traditional drama by Joanna McClelland Glass, a determined young Canadian secretary (Kati Brazda) with a passion for Wallace Stevens tries to straighten out the paperwork of a crotchety lawmaker, Francis Biddle (Fritz Weaver). Directed by Sandy Shinner. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

WONDERFUL TOWN
Brooke Shields has joined the cast of the buoyant, beautifully staged revival of the musical from 1953, about two spirited Ohio sisters' adventures in Greenwich Village. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

DANCE

"FOREVER TANGO"
Luis Bravo's evening of Argentine dance features fourteen dancers and an eleven-piece orchestra. The show has returned to the Shubert following a successful run this summer. (225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Nov. 16, Nov. 18-19, and Nov. 23 at 8; Nov. 17 and Nov. 20 at 2 and 8; and Nov. 21 at 3. Through Nov. 28.)

"FOR THE CHILDREN OF YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW"
Pina Bausch's Tanztheater Wuppertal brings a nostalgic, multilayered work to Brooklyn. On a stage strewn with red blossoms, sand, and water, dancers evoke touchstones of childhood, maturity, and old age. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Nov. 16 and Nov. 18-20 at 7:30 and Nov. 21 at 3.)

"RENNIE HARRIS' LEGENDS OF HIP-HOP"
No choreographer has been more successful in expanding the expressive possibilities of hip-hop dance than Rennie Harris. But he's also devoted to his roots. This touring showcase is an offshoot of an annual conference he runs in Philadelphia that calls together the pioneers of hip-hop dance as a kind of high council of authenticity. The lineup includes the West Coast funksters Don Campbell (the creator of locking) and Boogaloo Sam (the creator of popping) and the Rock Steady Crew. DJ Evil Tracy mans the turntables, and Kenny Muhammad serves as a human beat box. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Nov. 18-19 at 7, Nov. 20 at 2 and 7, and Nov. 21 at noon and 5. Through Nov. 28.)

GARTH FAGAN DANCE
In its season at the Joyce, the company unveils a new three-part work for twelve dancers, "----ing," set to Brahms's Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet in B Minor, Op. 115. The new piece appears every night, alongside repertory works that have been divided among two programs. Program A includes "Discipline Is Freedom," "Trips and Trysts," "----ing," and "Translation Transition"; Program B includes "Dance*collage*forromie," "----ing," and "Woza." (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Program A: Nov. 16-17 and Nov. 19-20 at 8 and Nov. 21 at 2. Program B: Nov. 18 at 8, Nov. 20 at 2, and Nov. 21 at 7:30.)

"DANCE TO MONK"
During her forty years as a performing-arts iconoclast, Meredith Monk has consistently ignored the boundaries between disciplines. So it makes sense for Danspace Project to honor her in its "Anniversaries" series by inviting other choreographers to set new works to her musical compositions. Among the dance-makers participating are Seán Curran, Doug Varone, Ann Carlson, Molissa Fenley, and, on film, Bill T. Jones. A benefit performance, on Nov. 23, features Elizabeth Streb, Eiko and Koma, Lar Lubovitch, and Monk herself, vocalizing as the Merce Cunningham company dances. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Nov. 19-21 at 8:30. Gala performance Nov. 23 at 7:30. 212-904-1330, ext. 23.)

"DOGUGAESHI"
The Japan Society commissioned the Obie-winning puppeteer Basil Twist to create a work reflecting the intricate, multilayered puppet art of Japan's Awaji region, in which scores of sliding screens and inverting doors ultimately reveal a palace tableau. Twist has transformed the society's stage into an intimate black-box space to show the piece, in which a Japanese fox travels through vibrant screens decorated with abstract and modern Japanese imagery. With live samisen performance by Yumiko Tanaka. (333 E. 47th St. 212-752-3015. Nov. 18 at 7 and 9:30, Nov. 19 and Nov. 22 at 9:30, Nov. 20 at 3 and 9:30, Nov. 21 at 3 and 7, and Nov. 23 at 7.)

JAZZ TAP ENSEMBLE
Twenty-five years ago, the L.A.-based Jazz Tap Ensemble helped introduce tap dance to the concert stage. Today, few such concert-tap companies survive, and the Ensemble has become a pickup operation, yet the troupe's anniversary season at the Joyce confirms its continued success as an incubator of talent. Along with the fleet-footed mainstay Sam Weber,

the roster includes the ferocious Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, who was a teen-ager when she joined, a decade ago, and the elegant Joseph Wiggan, who is a teen-ager still. Video footage of Gregory Hines anchors a tribute to the late dancer. With live musical accompaniment. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 23 at 8. Through Nov. 28.)

ELLIS WOOD DANCE

The choreographer shows her penchant for drama in two ensemble works by her all-female company. The new "Hurricane Flora," with live music by Daniel Bernard Roumain, is a frenzied whirl of bodies in a gale. In "Timeless Red," from 1998, three white-clad women thrash center stage, offset by two women in red—one who stands downstage, slowly tossing her hair, the other a dominatrix who watches them from a raised platform, smirking and cocking a hip. The evening also includes a solo for Wood set to a Rufus Wainwright song. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 17-20 at 7:30.)

"AWAKENING DANCING GODDESSES"

Christine Jowers is the soloist in an evening of allegorical dance, rich with props (a red silk scarf, a pedestal, balloons), that explores the life and art of Isadora Duncan. Jowers's whiplike body carries off an impressive range of styles, from meditative to chaotic, flowing to abrupt. The program (which includes thoughtful narration by Jowers) features work by Duncan, Catlin Cobb, Ann Carlson, and Kun Yang Lin, and new pieces by Janis Brenner, Larry Keigwin, and Rachel Cohen. In the impassioned fi-

TABLES FOR TWO

CAFÉ LUXEMBOURG

200 W. 70th St., at Amsterdam Ave. (212-873-7411)—After twenty-one years, Café Luxembourg may no longer have limos queued up outside, but each night the narrow space around the zinc-topped bar is choked with diners waiting for their tables and drinkers just in for the atmosphere. Under the warm, flattering yellow light, opera mavens on their way to Lincoln Center fortify themselves for "La Bohème"; intellectuals who've drifted down from Columbia read Foucault, helped along by a glass of wine; and immaculately dressed grandes dames flirt decorously with their young admirers. Most of the patrons seem to be regulars. On a recent evening, the hostess greeted nearly every party that came through the door with a peck on the cheek. "Where have you been?" she asked one elderly gentleman. "On vacation?"

The food is Gallic comfort food—rabbit, duck, steak—served in American-sized portions. Suppress the urge for the frogs' legs, which are breaded, fried, and soggy; better is an arugula salad with a mound of mild goat cheese and slivers of soft, sweet pears. A waitress, pressed for a recommendation, hesitated over scallops and chicken before settling on the seared tuna, which arrived on a nest of black and white noodles with a pool of green-onion purée, all subtle flavor and squishy texture. (One hoped she wasn't trying to move a slow-selling entrée.) Another runner-up, the hanger steak, was tenderly cooked but overwhelmed by gravy, and accompanied by a smooth puddle of buttery mashed potatoes. The apple-crumb tart was a pleasant surprise, with a rich burnt-caramel sauce that tempered the sugary apples and flaky pastry.

Café Luxembourg has managed to become a neighborhood fixture, a haven of dependable, if pedestrian, bistro fare in something of a culinary wasteland. It might not be the place to see and be seen that it once was, but its numerous mirrors still enable a kind of theatre. Early on, the cast is decidedly silver-haired. As the evening progresses, a younger crowd takes over, though the fashions—sweater sets, blazers, and button-downs—remain the same. (Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Entrées $19-$29.)

—*Andrea Thompson*

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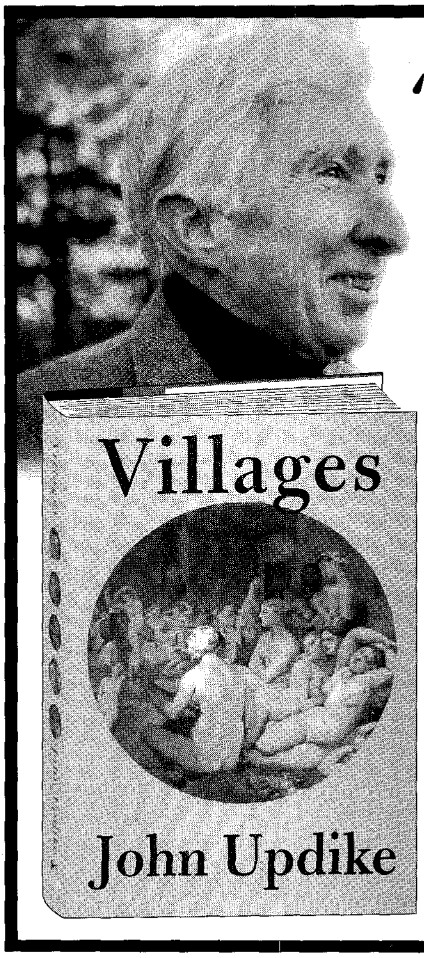

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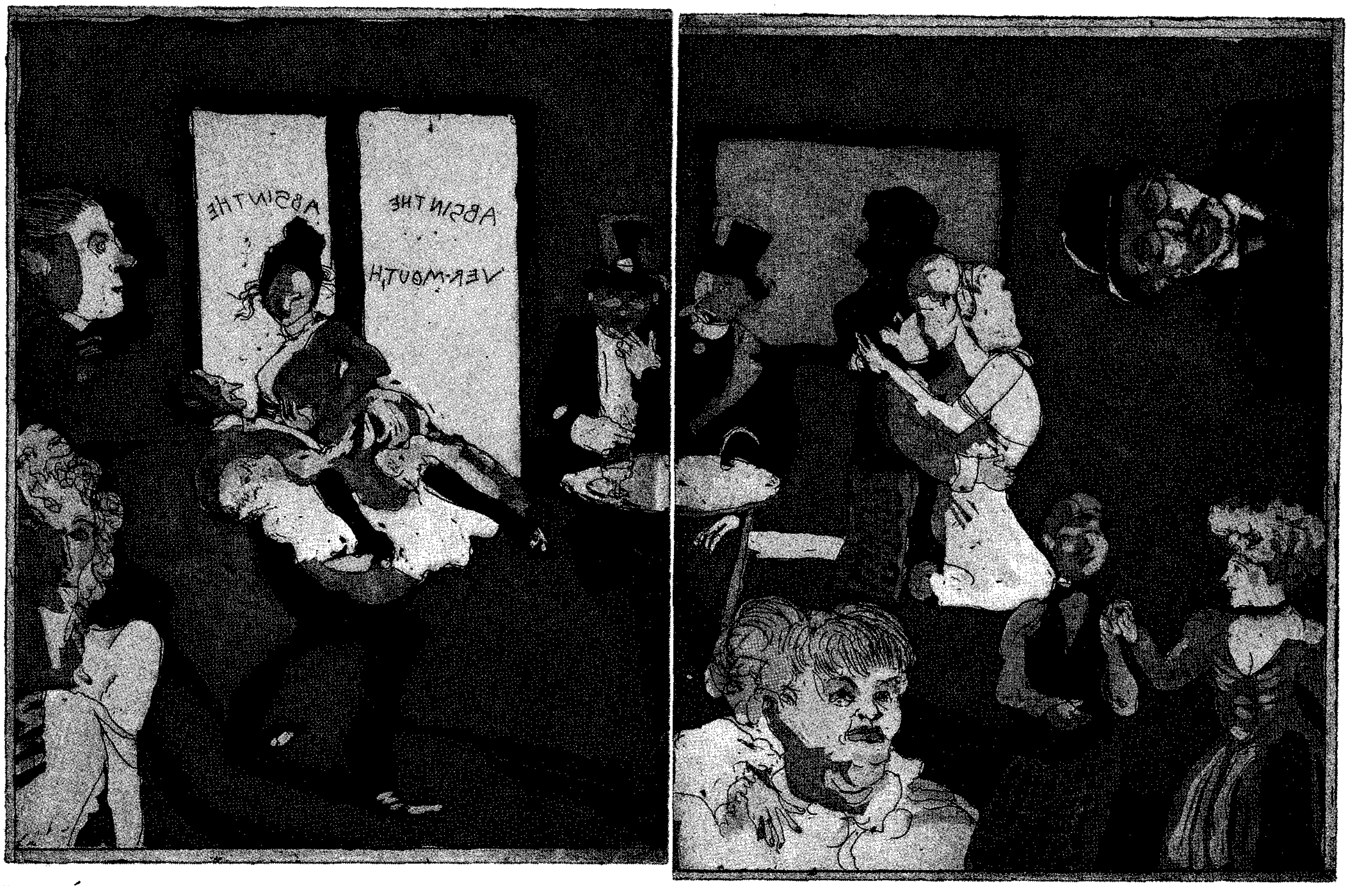
nale, Jowers performs Duncan's choreography for "Revolutionary Étude," set to Scriabin, giving it her own rebel interpretation. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 19-20 at 9 and Nov. 21 at 7:30.)

"I AM THE MOON AND YOU ARE THE MAN ON ME"
Julie Atlas Muz, the burlesque performance artist-cum-choreographer best known for her risqué mermaid act (performed in a saltwater tank), brings a new sample of her invention to P.S. 122. (First Ave. at 10th St. 212-477-5288. Nov. 18-20 at 8. Through Nov. 28.)



"Belle Époque," a musical evocation of Toulouse-Lautrec's heyday at the Moulin Rouge, now in previews at Lincoln Center.

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NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

BEBEL GILBERTO
The Brazilian singer returns to New York (see This Week). (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. Nov. 17 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Nov. 18 at 8: The majority of the people in Zimbabwe are Shonas, a group whose beliefs include the notion of communication with the dead through the use of the mbira, a form of shell-encrusted thumb piano. The instrument is often used in all-night ceremonies; two of its finest practitioners, **Beauler Dyoko** and **Cosmas Magaya,** offer a somewhat shorter performance at the Thalia Theatre. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) Nov. 20 at 8: **Ali Akbar Moradi,** a master of an ancient lute called the tanbur, presents a night of music from Kurdistan. (Symphony Space. For more information about both shows, call 212-545-7536.)

MAGNETIC FIELDS
The dour Yonkers native Stephin Merritt formed this art-pop band in 1990 and a decade later won acclaim for the witty, wry, and persistently melancholy triple album "69 Love Songs." The latest Magnetic Fields record, "i," is a typically lovesick affair. (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 18 at 8:30.)

TAKING BACK SUNDAY
This Long Island emo band puts wordy tales of heartbreak and disillusion (delivered with plaintive vocals) atop aggressive, pop-punk guitar. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. Nov. 19 at 7.)

"LYRICS & LYRICISTS"
The Broadway song-and-dance man André De Shields has organized a celebration of the work of Andy Razaf, a witty and underrated lyricist who collaborated with Fats Waller on such classics as "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Honeysuckle Rose," and "The Joint Is Jumpin'." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Nov. 20 at 8, Nov. 21 at 2:30 and 8, and Nov. 22 at 2 and 8.)

BADLY DRAWN BOY
Despite (or perhaps because of) a critically acclaimed début album of experimental indie rock ("The Hour of Bewilderbeast," which won England's Mercury Prize in 2000), Damon Gough (the Boy in question) has a reputation for unpredictable, shoddy, and often flustered live performances. His studio albums are equally uneven, but his latest, "One Plus One Is One," has a touch of the transcendent vision that made "Bewilderbeast" so revered. (Town Hall. Nov. 20 at 8.)

COHEED & CAMBRIA
Borrowing equally from the angular post-punk of Fugazi and the progressive metal of Rush, and adding a few Tolkienesque song titles, Coheed & Cambria make music rich with jittery guitar blasts and high-minded lyrical flourishes. (Roseland. Nov. 23 at 7:30.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—Nov. 19: The local ensemble **Las Rubias del Norte** rearranges Latin big-band music for a handful of instruments, including the glockenspiel. They mix boleros, cha-cha-cha, and cumbias with lieder and cowboy songs, held together by the captivating vocals of the two lead singers, Emily Hurst and Allyssa Lamb, veterans of the New York Choral Society.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Nov. 17: **Jerry Jeff Walker** may still be best known for his early-seventies ode to a fellow named Bojangles, but he hasn't given up crafting tributes to true love and to his adopted state, Texas. Nov. 18: **Eddie from Ohio** is actually four people from Virginia who enjoy close vocal harmonies, a touch of rock and roll, and a good joke. Nov. 19: The Woodstock veteran **Richie Havens.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Nov. 22: The **Kills.** Not to be confused with their similarly named peers the Thrills, the Stills, and the Killers, this girl-boy indie-rock duo plays a lurid, gritty strain of bluesy garage punk similar to that of the White Stripes. Nov. 23: Scotland's **Dogs Die in Hot Cars** belie their PETA-provoking name with sprightly pop that recalls the quirkiness of XTC and other New Wave acts from the eighties. Their début album, "Please Describe Yourself," is a sunny, intoxicating tonic.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Nov. 17-20: **Tom Jones.** Performing his first club shows here in a decade, the Welsh Elvis returns to New York City fresh from collaborating on an album of rhythm-and-blues and rock-and-roll covers with the ex-Squeeze keyboardist Jools Holland. Jones's booming voice is in fine form, and even at sixty-four he's still a magnet for female undergarments.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Nov. 21: The folksy experimentalists **Animal Collective.**

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—Nov. 23: Two up-and-coming local bands with goth affinities

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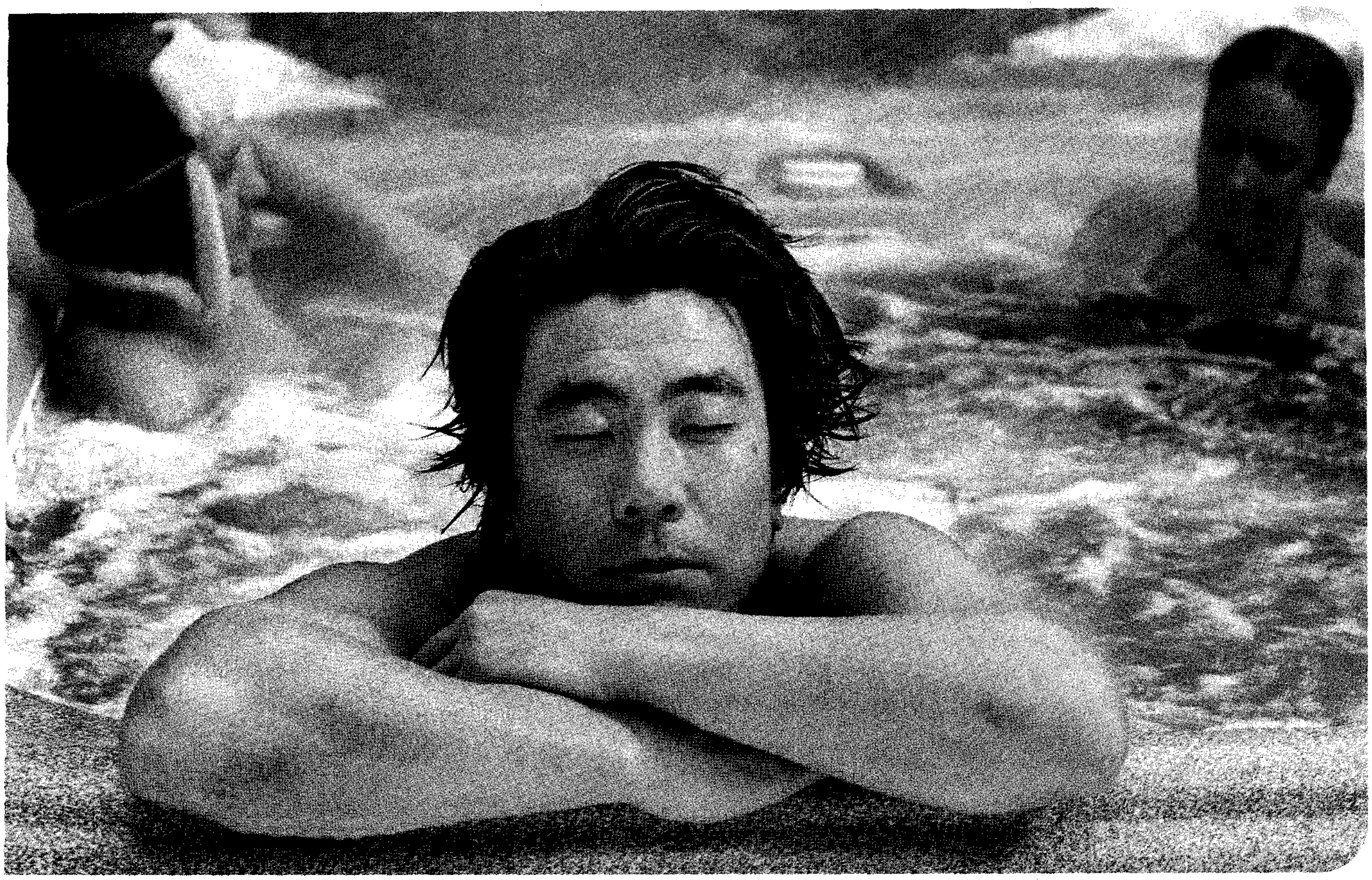

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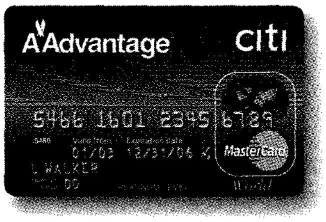

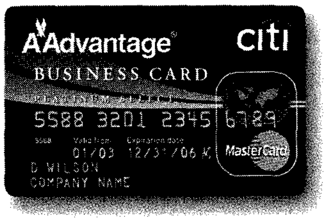

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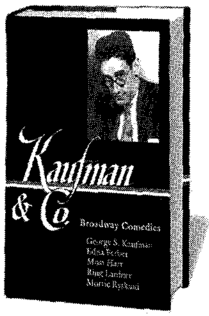
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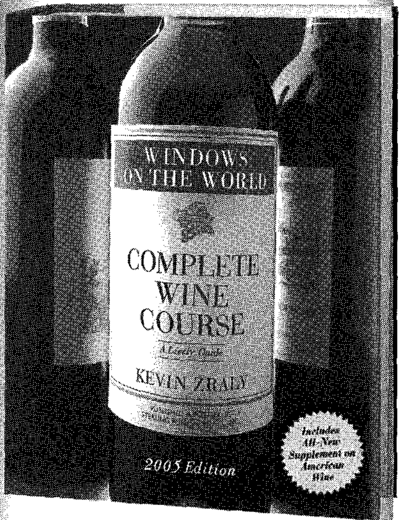
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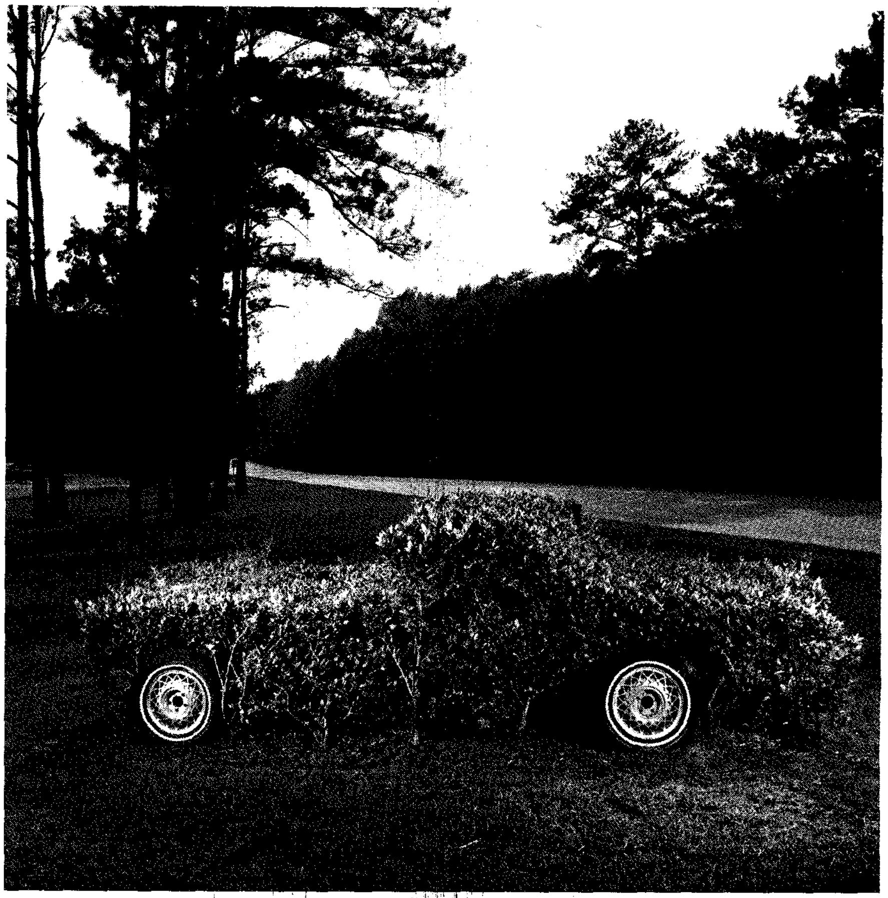
share a bill. The moody accordion-driven trio **Belacqua** plays intense, sparse songs rounded out with acoustic guitar and drums. **Spielerfrau** is the brainchild of the Soviet émigré, former television-news anchor, journalist, and singer-songwriter Michael Idov. The trio has a sound that mixes heartfelt Midwestern rock with intelligent lyrics full of Eastern European black humor and irony.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Nov. 18-20: The melodic folk pop of **Mason Jennings.** Nov. 22: The up-and-coming Canadian rocker **Sam Roberts** stops by with his band. Nov. 23: **Holly Golightly** started her musical career in the early nineties with a garage-rock group, Thee Headcoatees, but since she started releasing records in her own name (and she's released quite a few in the past decade) she's looked to country blues and early rock for inspiration. Last year she turned up on the White Stripes' acclaimed album "Elephant," which introduced her to a larger group of fans. With the long-running Atlanta, Georgia, garage rockers the **Woggles.**


"Shrub Car, South Carolina," by Burk Uzzle, at Laurence Miller (see Photography).

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—Nov. 18: The Roman vocalist and percussionist **Alessandra Belloni** is known for performing trance dances, musical exorcisms, and haunting love songs from Southern Italy. Here she'll add *forró*, samba, and other Brazilian influences to the mix. Nov. 20: A night of flamenco with **Willie & Lobo.** Nov. 23: **Rua** is Liz Madden and Gloria Muhall, a pair of classically trained musicians from Ireland who creatively mix the earthy music of their homeland with symphonic and theatrical forms.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Though its initials stand for Sounds of Brazil, this club has branched out in recent years to embrace everything from hip-hop to bhangra dance parties. On Nov. 21 it returns to its roots with a program of *maracatu* music from the northeastern corner of the country. The sharply syncopated rhythms will be pounded out by the fifteen percussionists of **Maracatu New York.** The **Nation Beat,** another local group, will appear in full costume, and **Jorge Martins,** a master percussionist from Recife, will be on hand to keep everyone dancing.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Nov. 20-21: Like the Ramones before them, the **Hives** aren't messing with a winning formula. The sartorially synchronized Swedish garage rockers became the hot band of the moment after the breakout success of their 2000 album, "Veni Vidi Vicious." Their follow-up, "Tyrannosaurus Hives," sticks close to the original shtick, making it a sweaty blast of silly fun.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through Nov. 21: The **David Sanborn Group.** Sanborn's funky pop-jazz inspires love and hatred in the jazz community, but few can deny the tonal beauty and suave phrasing of his alto-saxophone playing.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through Dec. 31, **Bobby Short.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through Nov. 20: The Broadway legend **Patti LuPone,** bringing an actorly flair to material already dense with drama, presents her new show, "The Lady with a Torch, Part II."

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Nov. 18-21: Although **Bennie Wallace** came on like a bruising avant-gardist when he hit town in the late seventies, the Southern tenor saxophonist harbors the soul of a classic swing player. Here he honors Coleman Hawkins, the tenor patriarch whose centennial is celebrated this year.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—The incisive new-jazz pianist **Vijay Iyer** bonds with the similarly adventurous saxophonist **Rudresh Mahanthappa** in a musical union that other bandleaders can only dream of. Iyer presents fresh compositions in both trio and quartet settings on Nov. 19-20.

SWEET RHYTHM
88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Nov. 19-20: **David Hazeltine,** an assured neo-bop pianist who's done first-rate work in trio settings (this year's album "Close to You" comes to mind), goes the quartet route here with the addition of **Jim Rotundi** on trumpet.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Nov. 21: The Canadian expat pianist **Renee Rosnes** has developed from a talented side woman to an assured soloist and bandleader. For this engagement, she débuts a promising quartet with the saxophonist **Walt Weiskopf,** the bassist **John Patitucci,** and the drummer **Victor Lewis.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—A remarkable roomful of paintings depicting an iconic George Washington dominates the show **"Gilbert Stuart."** Staring from the walls like eighteenth-century premonitions of photographic reproduction are multiple copies of Stuart's three famous Presidential portraits—all authenticated as from the Master's hand, and originally sold at a cost of a hundred dollars each. All of Stuart's sitters are given a highly detailed treatment, from the lace-frilled ladies and their florid, bewigged husbands to John Adams, twinkly and irascible at eighty-nine, and even the chagrined-looking dog who posed with the Duke of Northumberland's children. Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"Romare Bearden at the Met,"** works drawn from the permanent collection. Through March 6. ♦ **"William Kentridge."** A selection of works, dating from 1989 to 2001, by the South African artist. Through Feb. 20. ♦ **"China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 A.D."** Through Jan. 23. ♦ **"Princely Splendor: The Dresden Court, 1580-1620."** Through Jan. 30. ♦ **"The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530-1830."** Through Dec. 12. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—Celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary, the museum reopens in its renovated and enlarged home on Nov. 20. It will be open from 10 to 10 that day, and admission will be free. Otherwise, adult admission will be twenty dollars (seniors pay sixteen dollars, students pay twelve dollars, and children sixteen and under may come in for free with an adult), with free admission on Fridays from 4 to 8. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Fridays, 10:30 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"The Aztec Empire"** lines the Guggenheim's spiral with more than four hundred artifacts, from carvings depicting harvest work to the implements of human sacrifice. Through Feb. 13. ♦ **"Kandinsky Gallery: An Inaugural Selection."** Through May 11. ♦ **"Keith Haring: New Wave Aztec."** Through Feb. 6. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Bill Viola: Five Angels for the Millennium"** opens Nov. 18. ♦ **"James Lee Byars: The Perfect Silence"** opens Nov. 18. ♦ **"Small: The Object in Film, Video, and Slide Installation"** opens Nov. 18. ♦ **"Isamu Noguchi: Master Sculptor."** Through Jan. 16. ♦ Jennifer Pastor's **"The Perfect Ride."** Through Jan. 16. ♦ The city's museums are full of Romare Bearden's work right now, but **"The Art of Romare Bearden"** is the biggest, most thorough show. Through Jan. 9. ♦ Jacob Law-

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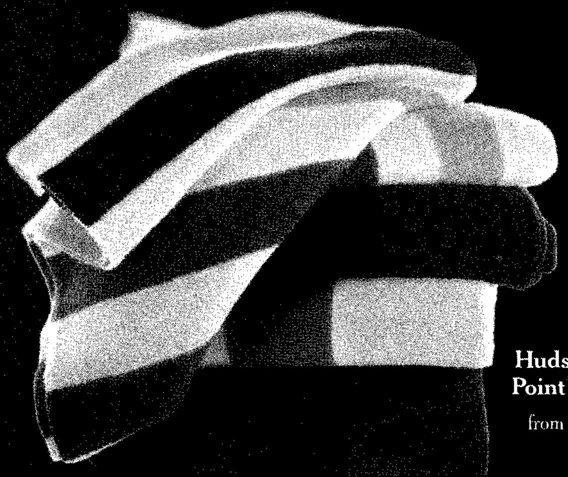

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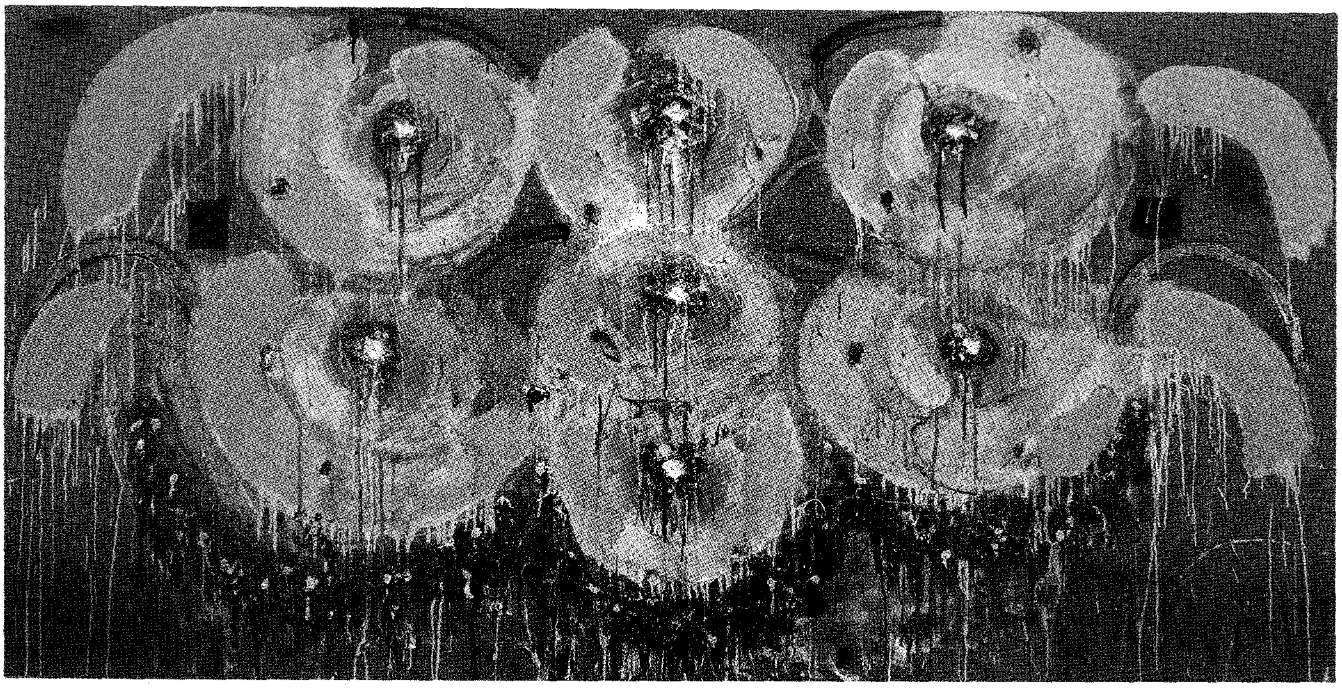
rence's **"War Series."** Through Jan. 31. ♦ **"Memorials of War."** Through Nov. 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children."** Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"Passing/Posing: Kehinde Wiley Paintings."** Through Feb. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"European Bronzes from the Quentin Collection."** Through Jan. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Innovator, Activist, Healer: The Art of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis."** Through Jan. 16. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays, 11 to 8; and Fridays, 11 to 3.)



New paintings (including "Perpetuo," above) by Joan Snyder are on view at Cuningham; her works on paper are at Alexandre.

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Comic Grotesque: Wit and Mockery in German Art, 1870-1940."** Through Feb. 14. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—Kerry James Marshall's **"One True Thing: Meditations on Black Aesthetics."** Through Jan. 9. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

ADOLPH GOTTLIEB
"Pictograph" paintings from a seminal decade (1941-51) of Gottlieb's career. The canvases are divided into crooked grids and filled with signs and symbols, which grow increasingly abstract over time. Eyes, hands, and faces dominate "Eyes of Oedipus" (1941), considered the first work in the sequence. The later paintings are brighter, with pinks and ochres and lots of abstract Miró-esque squiggles. The Navajo-influenced "Pink and Indian Red" (1946) looks like a richly woven blanket, while other pieces, like the ominously titled "Descent Into Darkness" and "Dark Journey," suggest the artist's more sombre tendencies. Through Dec. 23. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292.)

BRIAN HUNT
Seven of the gallery walls each bear a single "Airship" sculpture from the mid- to late seventies. The airships—blimp-shaped featherweight structures built from spruce or balsa wood and wrapped in silk paper and metallic leaf—are hung above head level, floating out from the walls as easily and elegantly as puffs of smoke. Through Dec. 11. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-744-7400.)

BARBARA KRUGER
A star-spangled exhibition of text and photo works by a premier activist artist. Red, white, and blue dominate silkscreen-on-vinyl "paintings" emblazoned with questions like "Who is free to choose? Who is beyond the law? Who is healed? Who is housed? Who speaks?" Elsewhere, the opening lines of the Pledge of Allegiance are given new, defiant meaning. A triad of works featuring photos of Bush declare him to be "failing upward" and "Pro-life for the unborn, Pro-death for the born." Kruger's pitch hasn't wavered much since the eighties. Her voice is still ardent but the work itself is rather predictable. Through Dec. 18. (Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-752-2929.)

Short List

IAN HAMILTON FINLAY
UBS Gallery, 1285 Sixth Ave. 212-713-2885. Through Dec. 3.

JOAN SNYDER
Alexandre, 41 E. 57th St. 212-755-2828. Through Dec. 23.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

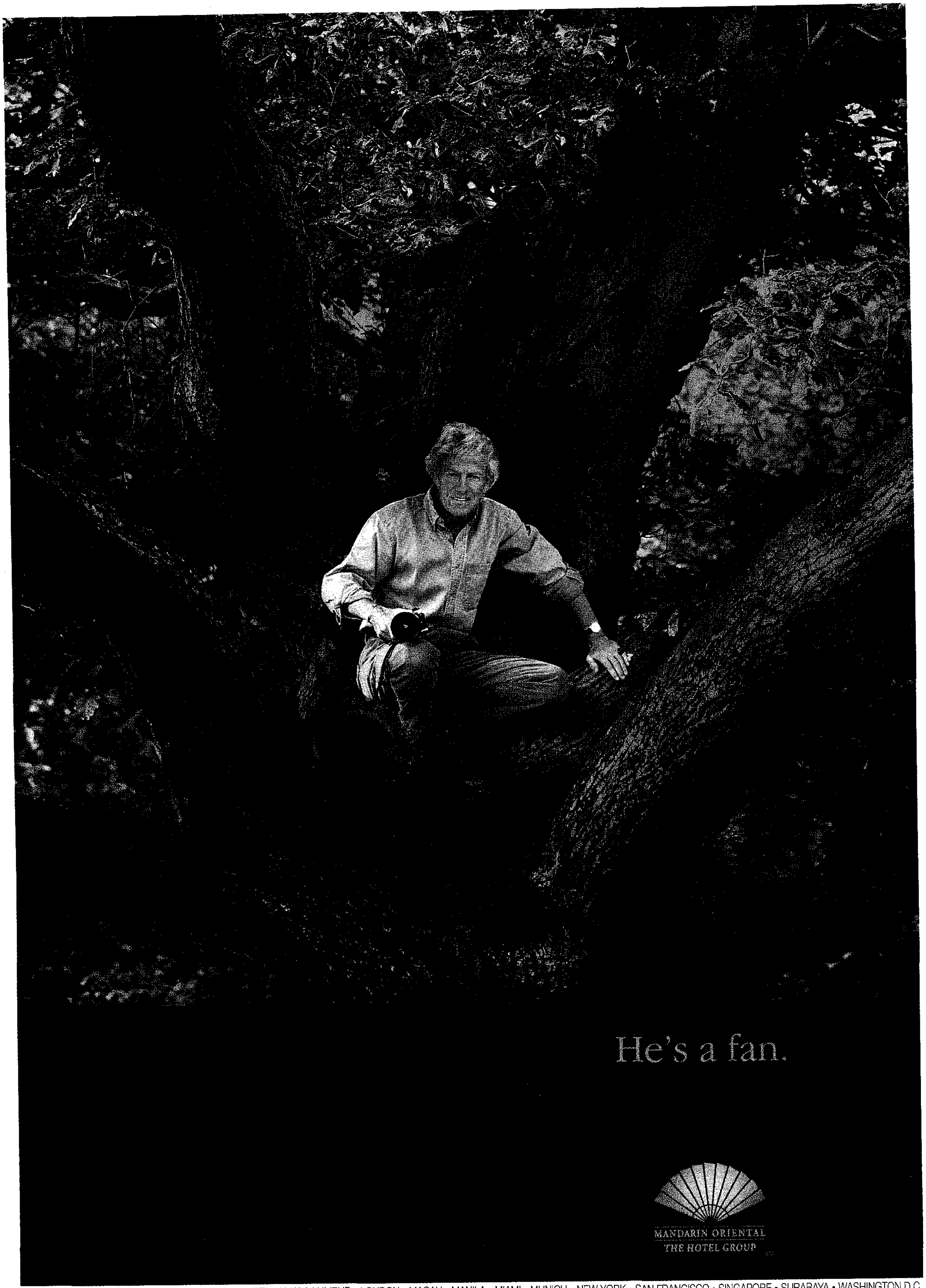
LOUISE BOURGEOIS
New drawings and sculptures. A pillowy female figure sewn from orange plaid cotton hangs limply by her belly; a suite of abstract drawings (entitled "Noli Me Tangere") resembles tissue samples viewed through a microscope; images made from woven ribbons look graceful despite their blocky, digitized outlines. Bourgeois's evocations of the body and her experiments in seriality remain formally surprising and viscerally affecting. Through Dec. 31. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

SPENCER FINCH
Light and poetry have been bedfellows since history's rosy-fingered dawn, but seldom have they been so literally entwined. "Sunlight in an Empty Room (Passing Cloud for Emily Dickinson, Amherst, MA, August 28, 2004)" uses fluorescent tubes and a "cloud" made of transparent bluish filters to reconstruct daylight recorded with light meters outside the poet's residence. "The Magic Hour, Stockholm, May 8, 2003 (Stalking Ingmar Bergman)" uses colored glass and daylight streaming into the gallery to re-create a moment outside Bergman's house and reflect on the director's perfect time for filming. Distorted butterflies in watercolor, painted solely with peripheral vision after Moritake's haiku ("The falling flower / I saw drift to the branch / Is a butterfly"), complete Finch's enchanting presentation. Through Nov. 20. (Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 212-727-3323.)

JOSEPH KOSUTH
A heavyweight of conceptual art delivers an installation built on the ruminations of thinkers from Spinoza and Nietzsche to Foucault and Cixous. Transparent strips of glass printed with white text encircle the gallery, illuminated from behind with white neon light; the visual effect is like a chatty Dan Flavin sculpture. "If God does not exist, everything depends on us," Camus intones, while Artaud snaps, "All Writing is Pig-Shit." The last word, perhaps fittingly, goes to Derrida, who envisions "a mental universe reinvented by each artist according to his needs." Through Dec. 4. (Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181.)

NICKY NODJOUMI
New work by the Iranian-born painter, whose career has been intertwined with events in his home country since before the revolution. Subjects in this show of highly allegorical paintings include politicians returning from a frog-gigging expedition and a gun-toting mullah with a woman whose chador has been cut away to reveal her naked body. Through Nov. 24. (Weiss, 520 W. 24th St. 212-691-6899.)

JOAN SNYDER
"The people of Iraq and most especially its women and children were in my thoughts constantly as I made these paintings," writes Snyder in a statement accompanying a show she calls "Women Make Lists." A springtime palette of rosy pinks, pale blue-greens, and lemon yellows is broken up with blood-hued impasto encrusted with glass beads, chunks of papier-mâché, and dried herbs. The symbolism of life-in-death is deliberately simple, as Snyder's big, vibrant canvases enact both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the joy of their making and the anxious tallying of the cost of war. Through Dec. 4. (Cuningham, 541 W. 25th St. 212-242-2772.)

"INNOCENCE AND INSIGHT"
A normal kid's crayonings please his parents, but the output of a prodigy who grows up to be famous piques the interest of almost everybody. Claire Oliver had the cute idea of pairing a mature work by a recognized artist with a blast from his or her past. At seven, Eric White drew Evel Knievel jumping his motorcycle over cars; now he paints a vast and shimmeringly packed parking lot. Julie Heffernan at eighteen liked the same lapidary designs and rich palette that she does now. Among the other artists are Eric Fischl, Robert Taplin, and Kojo Griffin. Through Dec. 4. (Oliver, 529 W. 20th St. 212-929-5949.)

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

FRED SANDBACK
Pieces designed specifically for a wall in the gallery; they're accompanied by early work by Neil Jenney, Blinky Palermo, and Richard Tuttle. Through Dec. 22. (See This Week.) (Roeder, 545 Broadway. 212-925-6098.)

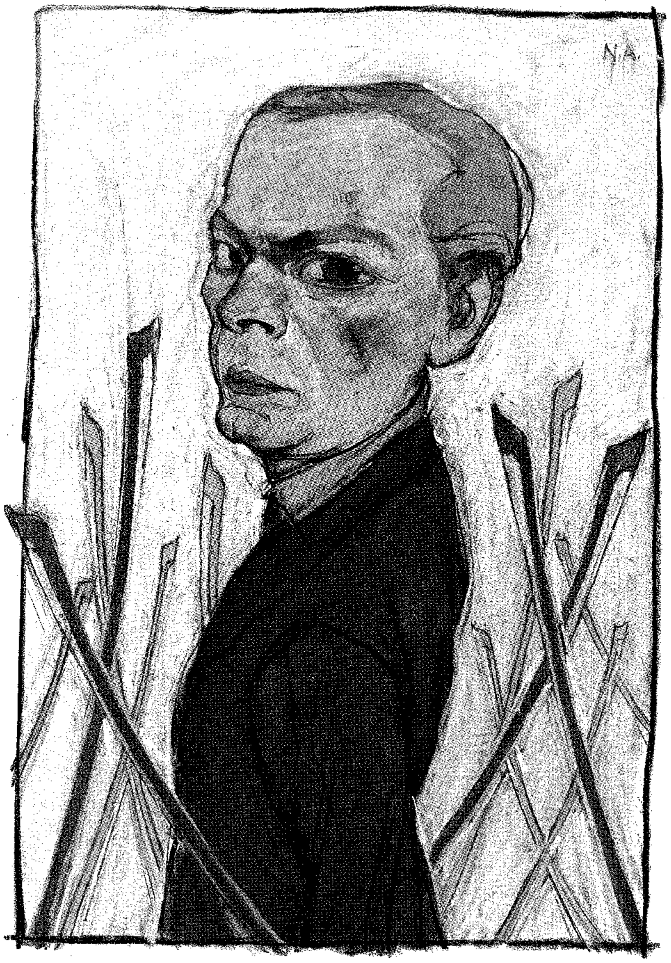
PHOTOGRAPHY

LOUISE LAWLER
Lawler goes behind the scenes at museums and art fairs, photographing art in various states of undress. A well-known Gerhard Richter painting, "Ema (Nude on a Staircase)," which echoes Duchamp's famous work, lies on its side in a MOMA gallery. In another photograph, Maurizio Cattelan's huge papier-mâché Picasso head, which he commissioned an actor to wear around MOMA in 1998, glares out from under plastic. Behind it hangs a Thomas Struth photograph of visitors wandering through the Metropolitan. This is true insider's art, and a return to form for Lawler. Through Dec. 23. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)

"PICTURING THE SOUTH"
These images of the American South by four photographers—William Christenberry, William Eggleston, Walker Evans, and Alec Soth—seem to borrow each other's details. Evans's silver-gelatin prints from the thirties, of sharecroppers' shacks, ruined mansions, barbershops, and war memorials, are remarkable for the clarity of their surfaces. Christenberry offers smaller color views of faded signs; a series of sixteen photos taken between 1964 and 1991, of the same storefront in Greensboro, Alabama, subtly documents a sad decline. Eggleston is represented by a portfolio of his revolutionary, vibrantly colored dye-transfer prints from the seventies, and Soth's extra-large color prints from 2002 include atmospheric landscapes (swamp with sodden mattress) and an old New Orleans blonde dressed up for Easter. Through Dec. 4. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

"3 ON THE SUBWAY"
Three exhibits mounted to coincide with the hundredth anniversary of the New York City subway system. ♦ Camilo José Vergara, a Chilean-born "urban archivist" who won a MacArthur grant in 2002, has shot pictures in and of the subway since 1970; the seventy-five color images on display, selected from tens of thousands of pictures, are identified by date and subway line and include the usual suspects—preachers, mariachis, kids gawking out the front door of the D train on their way to Coney Island—as well as shots of trains approaching, trains receding, trains in the cityscape, trains emerging from underground, trains impastoed with graffiti, and elevated train tracks in the snow. ♦ In "Rebuilding the 1 & 9," Sam Hollenshead has documented the men and machines that rebuilt, within a year, the subway tunnel and platforms at Ground Zero. The industrial framework, the shadows, and the grime make for rugged black-and-white portraits of laborers whose work, when finished, is largely invisible. ♦ Bruce Davidson's "Subway" series was last seen in its entirety at the International Center of Photography in 1981. Flesh—naked, scarred, heavily made up, and squeezing between the closing doors—is the subject of these lush color photographs. One image shows a meticulously turned-out society woman in a red straw hat and jewelry; another is of a flashy young woman riding between cars on an A train over Jamaica Bay. Through Jan. 17. (Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. 212-534-1672.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
In "Looking at *Life*," two hundred prints taken for that magazine between 1936 and 1992 provide both a survey of photojournalism and a capsule history of much of the twentieth century. John Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath" began as an assignment for *Life* in migrant-labor camps in 1939 with the photographer Horace Bristol. The exhibition is organized by theme: "War" includes Robert Capa's D Day pictures and Larry Burrows's harrowing shots from Vietnam. In "Personalities," a young Cassius Clay trains underwater in a photo-essay by Flip Schulke, and Marilyn Monroe is giddy in portraits by Alfred Eisenstadt. ♦ The digital snapshots in "Inconvenient Evidence: Iraqi Prison Photographs from Abu Ghraib" are small, unframed, and hung with strict simplicity in a small room downstairs. Some of the images first appeared in this magazine. Through Nov. 28. (1133 Sixth Ave. 212-857-0000.)



Bartók's six string quartets, at Lincoln Center (see Classical Music).

N. ASCENCIOS

Short List

CLEVERSON
M.Y. Art Prospects, 547 W. 27th St.
212-268-7132. Through Nov. 20.

MORTON NILSSON
ClampArt, 531 W. 25th St. 646-230-0020.
Through Dec. 18.

RAGHUBIR SINGH
Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 212-645-9444.
Through Dec. 30.

BURK UZZLE
Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 212-397-3930.
Through Dec. 24.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Nov. 16 at 7 and Nov. 17 at 10:15 A.M.: From Matta's untamed surrealist brushwork to Botero's corpulent and controlled imagery, this superb sale of Latin-American art is bound to have something for everyone. Among the most significant items are a 1937 portrait by Diego Rivera of Delfina Flores, one of his most famous child models, and a 1942 oil by Frida Kahlo titled "Niña Tehuacana, Lucha María (Sol y Luna)," which depicts a young girl, the sun, and the moon joined in a state of cosmic alignment. ♦ Nov. 19-20 at 10 A.M.: The world's largest bottle of wine—a 2001 Beringer Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon equal to a hundred and seventy-three regular bottles, commissioned by Morton's steak house—is the star lot in a two-day auction of wine. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Nov. 17 at 7 and Nov. 18 at 10 A.M.: War and art coalesce at this sale of works from Latin America, which includes a cased pair of Simón Bolívar's flintlock pistols, forged in the early nineteenth century by Nicolas-Noël Boutet, a legendary gun-maker at Versailles; one of only two known extant sets, it is expected to fetch nearly a million dollars. Wifredo Lam's "Sans Titre (la Pareja)" (1937) steers the auction toward less violent preoccupations with a nude couple whose precoital gestures resemble dance. The Guatemalan Luis Gonzalez Palma updates Lam's demurring female with a 1998 hand-toned photograph and aluminum-foil collage of a middle-aged woman. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

SWANN
Nov. 19 at 10:30 A.M.: The distinguished smaller house dedicated to etchings, lithographs, and other works on paper holds its own with a sale of contemporary art that includes notable works by Gottlieb ("Open Forms #23," expected to bring up to fifty thousand dollars), Beecroft, Richter, Lichtenstein, Warhol, and Rivers (including five works given by the artist to the playwright Arnold Weinstein). (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

KESTENBAUM & COMPANY
Nov. 22 at 3: The house, which specializes in Judaica, presents an exceptional sale of sixty-five Hebrew incunabula, or books printed before 1501 (estimated to be worth at least two million dollars), including such treasures as the first printed Hebrew book in history (a first edition of Nachmanides' "Commentary to the Pentateuch," circa 1470) and a 1492 first edition of the Mishnah, a code of Jewish oral law, with commentary by Maimonides. (12 W. 27th St. 212-366-1197.)

CONNOISSEUR'S ANTIQUES FAIR
The Art and Antique Dealers of America host this third annual sale, which features fifty-four dealers offering

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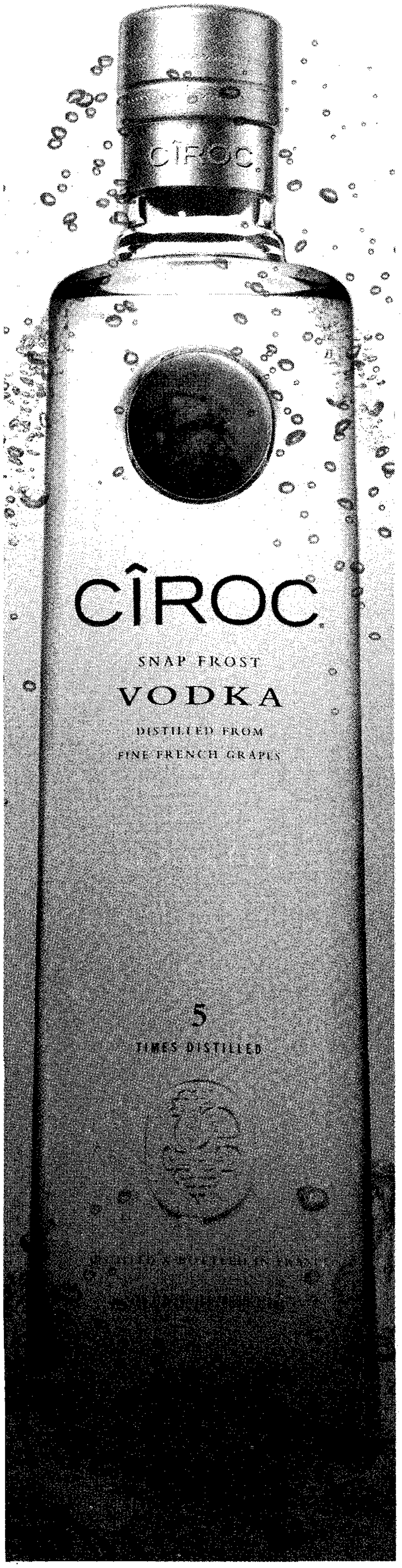


Egyptian antiquities, Biedermeier chairs and sofas, medieval reliquaries, Japanese screens and paintings, jewelry, books, and more. The association has joined up with the Morgan Library for a series of lectures and an exhibit highlighting the library's distinctive collection, as well as its projected expansion, designed by Renzo Piano. (69th Regiment Armory, Lexington Ave. at 25th St. 212-532-1516. Nov. 19-22.)

TRIPLE PIER ANTIQUES SHOW
One of the season's major shows, with some six hundred exhibitors offering furniture, art works, and much more. (Piers 90, 92, and 94, Twelfth Ave. at 55th St. 212-255-0020. Nov. 20-21.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Nov. 17 at 8: Anna Netrebko brings her lustrous voice and newly minted star quality to the role of Musetta in **"La Bohème,"** joining a cast that features Elena Evseeva (as Mimì), Frank Lopardo, and Peter Mattei; Daniel Oren conducts. ♦ Nov. 20 at 1:30: With Ruth Ann Swenson replacing Evseeva. ♦ Nov. 18 and Nov. 22 at 7:30: Otto Schenk's production of **"Tannhäuser"** (staged by Stephen Pickover) returns with some major star power—Deborah Voigt, Michelle DeYoung, Peter Seiffert (making his Met début, in the title role), and Thomas Hampson; Mark Elder. ♦ Nov. 19 and Nov. 23 at 8: **"Aida,"** featuring Norma Fantini (in the title role), Irina Mishura, Franco Farina, Ambrogio Maestri, and Kwangchul Youn; Marcello Viotti. ♦ Nov. 20 at 8: John Dexter's 1974 production of Verdi's **"I Vespri Siciliani,"** with Sondra Radvanovsky, Francisco Casanova, Leo Nucci, and Samuel Ramey; Frédéric Chaslin. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Nov. 17 at 1:30 and 7:30, Nov. 18 at 7:30, Nov. 19 at 8, and Nov. 20-21 at 1:30 and 8: To City Opera, not Broadway, goes the honor of having mounted the first New York professional stage production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's **"Cinderella,"** in 1993. It was Julie Andrews, of course, who starred in the work's original incarnation, the legendary television broadcast of March 31, 1957; this year's cast, with Sarah Uriarte Berry and Christopher Sieber (lately of "Taboo" and "Into the Woods," respectively) as the young lovers, features Eartha Kitt, Lea DeLaria, Ana Gasteyer, Renée Taylor, Dick Van Patten, and John Epperson, better known as the drag performer Lypsinka. Gerald Steichen conducts. (These are the final performances of the season.) (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)

TEATRO GRATTACIELO
New York's once-a-year-performance company, devoted exclusively to the emotionally fervent works of the Italian verismo school, celebrates its tenth anniversary by presenting **"La Cena delle Beffe"** ("The Supper of Jests"), the last full-length opera of Umberto Giordano (renowned for "Andrea Chenier") and not heard in the city for seventy-five years. Lando Bartolini, Michele Capalbo, and Patryk Wroblewski take the leading roles in this cloak-and-dagger tale of Renaissance Florence, in a concert performance conducted by Alfredo Silipigni. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 20 at 8.)

OPERA ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK
Long derided as kitsch because of its California Gold Rush milieu, **"La Fanciulla del West"** is in fact the noblest of Puccini's operas, a work that speaks eloquently to the potential of ordinary people. Aprile Millo, an OONY favorite if an unpredictable singer, takes the role of Minnie, the half-barmaid, half-Valkyrie who saves the life of the outlaw Dick Johnson, sung here by the robust American tenor Carl Tanner; their nemesis, the evil sheriff Jack Rance, is sung by the Roman baritone Marco Chingari, in his American début. Eve Queler conducts a concert performance. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 22 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
After a long and successful association with the Paris Opera, the American conductor James Conlon will assume the music directorship of Los Angeles Opera in 2006. For now, he's at the Philharmonic, conducting Mahler's First Symphony and the New York première of "Red Garuda," a new piano concerto written by Peter Lieberson for his good friend Peter Serkin. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Nov. 18 at 7:30, Nov. 19 at 11 A.M., and Nov. 20 at 8.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA
Music and the visual arts, which seem to be realigning in creative ways, provide a double theme for the ensemble's latest "Underground" concert at Zankel Hall. Steven Sloane conducts works by Randall Woolf, Michael Daugherty ("Fire and Blood," a pocket violin concerto inspired by Rivera's "Detroit Industry" murals, with Ida Kavafian), Morton Feldman ("De Kooning"), and Stephen Sondheim (excerpts from "Sunday in the Park with George"). (212-247-7800. Nov. 17 at 7:30.)

"SACRED MUSIC IN A SACRED SPACE": BRITTEN'S "CANTATA MISERICORDIUM"
Kent Tritle conducts his choir and orchestra in a rare performance of this masterpiece, a setting of the Biblical tale of the Good Samaritan, written for the centenary of the Red Cross in 1963; Pärt's "Te Deum" completes the program. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-288-2520. Nov. 17 at 8.)

KREMERATA BALTICA
There's a reason why Shostakovich's Fourteenth Symphony is seldom performed: it's an unremittingly dark orchestral song cycle (based on poems by Rilke and Apollinaire, among others) about death. The violinist Gidon Kremer and his superb young chamber orchestra play it here, along with other Shostakovich works. The vocal soloists are the soprano Yulia Korpacheva and the baritone Feodor Kuznetsov. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 20 at 8.)

MOSCOW VIRTUOSI
Another great violinist—Vladimir Spivakov—leads another Soviet-orbit ensemble in another Russian vocal work, albeit one even closer to the edge of the repertory: Rimsky-Korsakov's "Mozart and Salieri," a lyrical setting of Pushkin's "little tragedy" about music's most famous rivalry. The impressive soloists are Dmitry Korchak and Sergei Leiferkus; music by Bartók and Schoenberg ("Verklärte Nacht") completes the program. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 21 at 2.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
Christoph Eschenbach, off to a great start with his new ensemble, leads them in works by the young German composer Matthias Pintscher (the fiercely dissonant "Herodiade Fragment," with the soprano Marisol Montalvo) and Mahler (the Symphony No. 5). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 23 at 8.)

RECITALS

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "SONGS FROM THE GRECIAN ISLES"
Amy Burton and Dimitri Pittas sing songs by and about Greeks, with Steven Blier at the piano (see This Week). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Nov. 17 at 8.)

STEFANO SCODANIBBIO
Shortly before his death, Luciano Berio asked the virtuoso double bassist to "reinvent" his "Sequenza XIV," originally written for cello. Scodanibbio performs the New York première of the piece at Columbia University's Casa Italiana, along with Jacob Druckman's classic "Valentine" and a selection of his own works. (1161 Amsterdam Ave. Nov. 17 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Nov. 18 at 6:45: The soprano Susan Narucki headlines the latest of the Society's "Double Ex-

posure” concerts, in which back-to-back performances of recent works by Pascal Dusapin, David Froom, and David Rakowski are separated by an interlude for wine and conversation. (Rose Studio.) ♦ Nov. 21 at 5 and Nov. 23 at 7:30: Whenever a leading group offers a complete cycle of Bartók’s six string quartets in New York, it’s an event, and this one comes courtesy of the Orion String Quartet, the Society’s quartet-in-residence. The First, Second, and Fourth Quartets will be performed on the first program, with the Third, Fifth, and Sixth following two days later. (Alice Tully Hall.) (212-875-5788.)

CLASSICAL NOTES

SHORT STORIES

Concertos may still be the travelling violinist’s bread and butter, but most of the interesting work these days is happening in the more intimate forms. Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931) was not only one of the supreme violinists of his day but a composer of substance; his Six Sonatas for Solo Violin stretched the definition of the form to its limits. The Sonata No. 1—like Bach’s, in G Minor—is an explicit homage to the Baroque master, while others, such as the well-known Sonata No. 3, “Ballade,” are rich fantasies of fin-de-siècle chromatic harmony. And in Thomas Zehetmair (who has recorded them on ECM) they have an ideal interpreter. Zehetmair studied with one of the great Romantics, Nathan Milstein, but his free use of slides and rubato has a palpable sense of spirituality and a jagged edge.

An intense spirituality also lies at the core of the **“Rosary Sonatas,”** by another composer-violinist, Heinrich Biber (1644-1704), one of the first modern virtuosos. Biber’s innovation was in the daring use he made of scordatura, the practice of retuning the violin’s strings beyond the standard four-note cycle of fifths; this allowed him to paint the scenes of the fifteen original sacred mysteries of the Rosary—including the Annunciation and the Resurrection—in a dazzling array of tonal colors and compositional styles. (In the “Resurrection” Sonata, the symbolism is explicit: Biber demands that the two middle strings be crossed over behind the instrument’s bridge, producing an X design.) Andrew Manze’s performance (on Harmonia Mundi, with Richard Egarr on organ and harpsichord) combines a courtly sense of pacing with crisp bow strokes.

In Jennifer Koh’s **“Violin Fantasies”** (on Cedille), the limitations of the sonata are left behind in rangy and romantic one-movement works by Schubert, Schumann, Schoenberg, and Ornette Coleman. Koh, a smart player whose strong technique and lyrical style won her the top prize at the 1994 Tchaikovsky Competition, and her pianist, Reiko Uchida, offer performances of youthful drive and casual elegance.

—Russell Platt

BARGEMUSIC

Nov. 18 and Nov. 20 at 7:30: The violinist Mark Peskanov and the pianist Sergey Schepkin offer all six of Bach’s Sonatas for Violin and Keyboard. ♦ Nov. 19 at 7:30 and Nov. 21 at 4: On an all-Dvořák program, the Chester String Quartet performs not only the “American” Quartet but the composer’s lovely “Cypresses” as well; Ralph Votapek joins them for the Piano Quintet in A Major. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Nov. 18 at 8: The pianist Jonathan Biss, young classical royalty (Barber wrote the Cello Concerto for his grandmother), plays an all-Mozart program with his mother, the violinist Miriam Fried (of the Mendelssohn String Quartet). ♦ Nov. 19 at 8: Musicians from Marlboro (including the pianist Jeremy Denk) offer works by Mozart, Franck (the Piano Quintet), and Leon Kirchner. ♦ Nov. 20 at 8: In “The Art of André Watts,” the veteran pianist joins the clarinettist David Shifrin and other friends for music by Mozart and Poulenc. (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949.)

SOHEIL NASSERI

The stylish young pianist, embarking on a multiyear Beethoven cycle, plays a clutch of the composer’s sonatas, including the “Moonlight” and the “Pastoral.” (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 18 at 8.)

PRISM SAXOPHONE QUARTET

The noted group celebrates its twentieth anniversary with a concert that features the première of “Steep and Deep,” a piece about skiing, by the Princeton composer Steven Mackey. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Nov. 19 at 8:30.)

GEORGE CRUMB’S SEVENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

Carnegie Hall celebrates the fiercely expressive music of the soft-spoken American master with a recital by the pianist Margaret Leng Tan, who performs Volumes I and II of Crumb’s “Makrokosmos.” A discussion with Tan and Crumb follows. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 20 at 7:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"THE EAST COAST LISTENING ROOM"

Dean Olsher, of the radio show “The Next Big Thing,” hosts an evening of independent-radio documentaries culled from the Third Coast International Audio Festival, in Chicago. (Galapagos, 70 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. For more information, call 212-669-3333. Nov. 18 at 7:30.)

"THE ART OF SQUATTING"

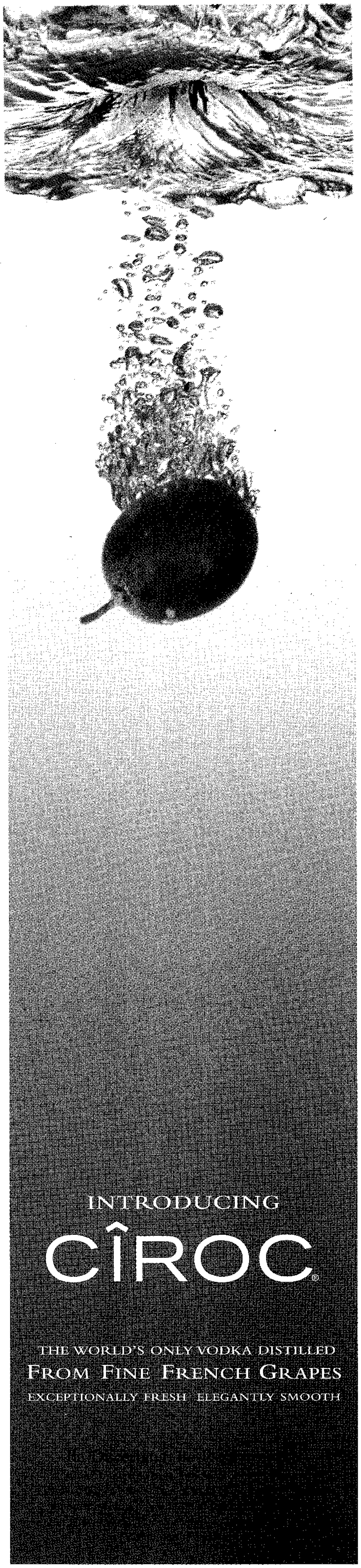
A few of the pioneering urban homesteaders who took over and eventually secured (legally and physically) a number of buildings on the Lower East Side of Manhattan are putting a portion of their archives on display, including flyers, posters, and photographs, starting Nov. 20. The show opens with a party, from 7 to 11, that includes a screening of the 1988 documentary “Underground in Alphabet City” and appearances by Seth Tobocman, Fly, Lawrence van Abbema, and other artists. (Sixth Street Community Center, 638 E. 6th St. For more information, call 917-847-9180. The exhibit can be seen on weekends by appointment through Dec. 31.)

READINGS

Nov. 18 at 7: Samuel Menashe and Dan Moran offer a selection of their poetry. (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 18 at 7:30: Lucille Clifton joins Elizabeth Alexander, Robert Hass, Brenda Hillman, Galway Kinnell, Toni Morrison, Walter Mosley, and many other poets and writers for a celebration of Clifton’s poetry. (Kaye Playhouse, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448.) ♦ Nov. 20 at 4: WordsWithoutBorders.org, a Web site devoted to translating fiction from around the world into English, presents an afternoon of bilingual children’s stories, with the children’s-book author Vera B. Williams and others. (Poets House, 72 Spring St. 212-431-7920.) ♦ Nov. 23 at 7: The Kitchen’s “Necessary Translations” series focusses on Mexico City, with the writer Alma Guillermoprieto. Rubén Gallo, the editor of “The Mexico City Reader,” will provide the introduction. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11.)

TALKS

Nov. 16 at 6:30: The journalist Ian Buruma considers the future of dictatorships. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-930-0855.) ♦ Nov. 18 at 6:30: The actor Elliott Gould, the film critic Leah Rozen, and others talk about going to the movies. (The Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. 212-423-3337.)



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MOVIES OPENING

BAD EDUCATION
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 19. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

FEAR AND TREMBLING
A young Belgian woman (Sylvie Testud) takes a job in Japan, in a dark comedy about cultural dislocation. Alain Corneau directed. In French. Opening Nov. 19. (Cinema Village.)

NATIONAL TREASURE
A third-generation treasure hunter (Nicolas Cage) searches for a trove hidden by the Founding Fathers, in an action movie directed by Jon Turteltaub. With Harvey Keitel, Jon Voight, and Diane Kruger. Opening Nov. 19.

THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS MOVIE
The feature-film début of the fastidious sponge. With Tom Kenny, Scarlett Johansson, David Hasselhoff, Alec Baldwin, and others lending their voices. Opening Nov. 19.

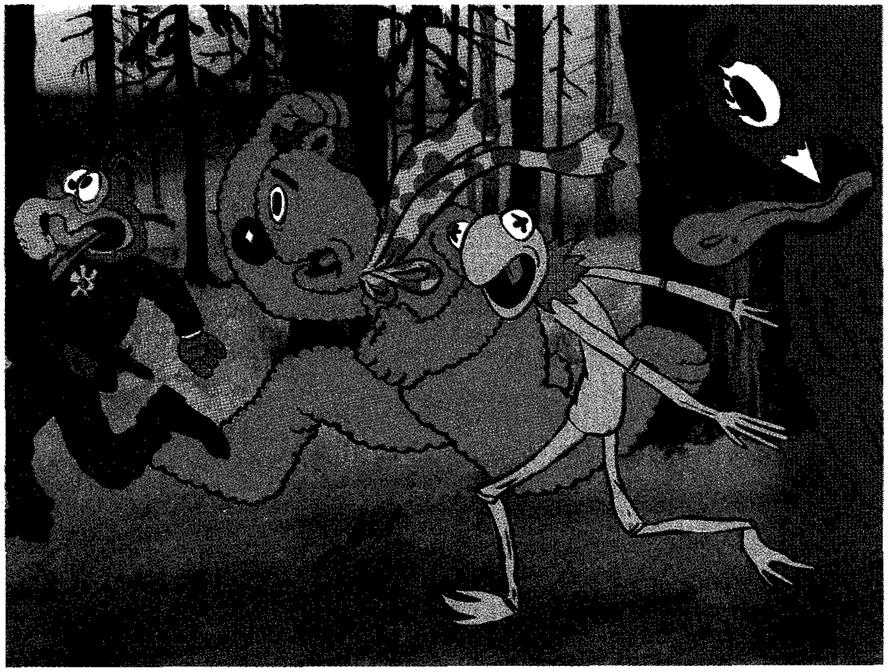
YOU I LOVE
A Moscow anchorwoman finds her boyfriend in bed with a young man, in a comedy directed by Olga Stolpovskaja and Dmitry Troitsky. In Russian. Opening Nov. 19. (Quad Cinema.)

FILM NOTES

ALFIE
This American remake of the 1966 film that made Michael Caine a star has taken the dirty Cockney soul of the original and buffed it squeaky clean. The movie still has a sketchlike framework that's fun to watch develop, but a story about a skirt-chasing Lothario who masks his loneliness with sexual conquests no longer has the currency it once did. As the title character, Jude Law brings a jauntiness to this role that makes him immensely likeable; unfortunately, his sanitized asides make him seem like a preening, clueless laddie. As the women who fall for Alfie's charms, Susan Sarandon, Marisa Tomei, and others acquit themselves well, although their only purpose is to teach Alfie life lessons.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 11, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE BIG RED ONE
Twenty-four years after its first appearance, Samuel Fuller's Second World War drama is not merely rereleased but revitalized. Under the loving tutelage of Richard Schickel, forty-five minutes of missing footage have been restored to their rightful place, and viewers will be able to assess this harsh and glaring testament as Fuller meant it to be. The bones of the story remain: Sergeant Possum (Lee Marvin) and four of his infantry men (Mark Hamill, Robert Carradine, Bobby Di Cicco, and Kelly Ward) fight together, and stay alive, all the way from North Africa to the concentration camps. If the restoration provides surprisingly little fluency, that is because Fuller wanted his representation of combat to be more jagged than smooth, closer to a prolonged psychotic episode than a military campaign; such style works supremely for the chaos of D Day and the breaching of enemy defenses, less so in such forcibly weird sequences as the assault on German troops inside a lunatic asylum. What binds the fragments together is the presence of Marvin; his gaze was never more icy, and the world-weariness of the action hero was never more finely caught.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/15/04.) (Film Forum; Nov. 17-18.)

BIRTH
A dismayingly skillful exercise in high-style creepiness. Nicole Kidman, her hair cropped close, her body reduced to a mannequin skinniness, is Anna, a Fifth Avenue heiress whose husband, Sean, died of a heart attack in Central Park when Anna was twenty-five. Ten years later, just as Anna is about to marry a good-natured man (Danny Huston) who has patiently wooed her for years, a ten-year-old boy shows up and announces that he is Sean reborn. The boy (Cameron Bright) has a steady, unnerving gaze and a pointed chin—one of those demon-child glowering masks from the "Damien: Omen II" era of horror movies. But his self-assurance, as well as his knowledge of details of Sean and Anna's life together, amazes and captivates Anna. She's convinced that he's her dead husband in a new body. As Kidman sits naked in her bath, the boy takes off his clothes and climbs in with her—one of the most embarrassing scenes in the history of the movies. The British director Jonathan Glazer directs this rubbish with an assured elegance; he creates a magical winter fairy-tale atmosphere in New York, a looming sense of the uncanny. The movie is an appalling combination of distinguished talent and inane ideas. With Lauren Bacall and Anne Heche. Music by Alexandre Desplat and, in one stunning sequence, Richard Wagner.—*David Denby* (11/8/04) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)



At BAM, "Muppets, Music, and Magic: Jim Henson's Legacy," a weekend festival.

ZOHAR LAZAR

DAYS OF BEING WILD
The second film by the director Wong Kar-Wai, and the first in which he displayed his signature traits that continue to fascinate and annoy—the prediliction for loosely interconnected scenes of elliptical conversation, the obsession with rainfall, and the intuitive gift for isolating the moments when his actors drop their masks, revealing elation, longing, and ennui. This 1991 movie is about a love triangle, with a playboy (the late Leslie Cheung) altering the geometries. It's often slow, almost languid, but unforgettable. With Maggie Cheung, Andy Lau, and Carina Lau. In Cantonese.—*Michael Agger* (Film Forum; Nov. 19-23.)

ENDURING LOVE
Ian McEwan's 1988 novel has been freely adapted by Joe Penhall, and the result is directed with customary grace by Roger Michell; whether their efforts were worthwhile, or well advised, is seriously open to question. Nobody can doubt the perilous verve of the opening, in which Joe (Daniel Craig) and his girlfriend, Claire (Samantha Morton), witness a fatal balloon accident in an English field. From here on, though, the drama deflates, and we are left with the grinding, post-traumatic account of a relationship on the skids, set in a London that feels sickly with rain and spent light. Also on hand, like a bad angel, is Jed (Rhys Ifans), who was there as the balloon crashed and who subsequently makes it his mission to stalk the unfortunate Joe, apparently in the name of love. We are meant to ponder the various facets of passion, from the creepy to the domestic, as they glint throughout the film, yet one's overwhelming response is irritation—even at the climax, Joe seems either too stunned or too reflective to act as he should, and his stone-faced antiheroism is hard to take. Possibly the unfunniest movie of the year.—*A.L.* (11/1/04) (Lincoln Square and Union Square.)

GOLDFINGER
In the third entry of the 007 series—a nutty blockbuster—every emerging piece of the James Bond formula teeters on the edge of camp, especially the sacrificial one-night stand (here she's suffocated in gold paint) and the sumptuous lair of the villain. Sean Connery's depiction of James Bond as a "complete sensualist" (in his words) "with a sense of humor" blossoms this time around. Gert Frobe is nerve-rackingly alert as the stubby title villain, who hopes to corner the Western world's gold supply by contaminating all the bullion in Fort Knox. Harold Sakata is indomitable as the Korean assassin Oddjob. And Honor Blackman's Pussy Galore, the butch ringmaster of a flying circus, makes a piquant foil to the hero. (Connery gets his biggest laugh with his loving pronunciation of her name: "Pooh-sea.") Originally released in 1964.—*Michael Sragow* (Sunshine Cinema; Nov. 19-20.)

THE GRUDGE
Here's a new one: the Japanese horror film "Ju-on" gets its tepid Hollywood makeover by its *original* director, Takashi Shimizu. The movie is your standard haunted-house boilerplate, with an American exchange student in Tokyo (Sarah Michelle Gellar)

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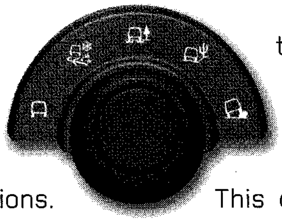

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out to solve the mystery. There are rattling sounds, dark shadows, and the always reliable sightings of ghosts (in this case a zombified boy). As Gellar chases the nasty demons around, people keep entering the house and the body count rises. There's no plot to speak of, and no real terror, just a collection of nicely photographed scenes.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE INCREDIBLES
A shiny new project from Pixar, sprinting in the footsteps of "Toy Story." Bob and Helen Parr are retired superheroes, raising their suspiciously gifted children in the suburbs. Bob, stuck in an office job, is lured back to the fray; being a lunk, he stumbles into a trap, and Helen, being a wife, has the guts and initiative to set out and rescue him. The movie, written and directed by Brad Bird, is a smart compound of shameless visual exaggeration (Bob's muscle tone alone is a special effect), and a touchingly unhip reliance on emotional realism. Instead of giggling references to other movies, we get snatches of ordinary family bickering, plus a distinct air of nineteen-fifties innocence—quite a fillip, given that many computer-animated movies pride themselves on technological progress and nothing else. The main voiceovers are delivered by Craig T. Nelson, Samuel L. Jackson, and—most winning of all—Holly Hunter.—*A.L.* (11/15/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

PANDORA'S BOX
Louise Brooks, a great—almost impersonal—beauty, left Hollywood in 1928, at the height of her career, and went to Germany for the role of a lifetime. G. W. Pabst had selected her to play Lulu in this film, adapted from the Wedekind plays "Erdgeist" and "Die Büchse der Pandora." Pabst, one of the giants of the screen, is perhaps most famous for his treatment of sex, violence, and abnormal psychology, and Wedekind's sex tragedy provided startling material. Lulu is the sexually insatiable female, the archetype of a voracious, destructive woman. She has no moral sense and no interests beyond sensuality; when a man is exhausted, she leaves him. For sheer erotic dynamism, the backstage scenes on the opening night of a show Lulu is in have never been equalled. Moving through the chiaroscuro, Brooks, with her straight back and strong shoulders, seems to have her own form of sexuality—preconscious yet intuitively all-knowing. She's like a cool, beautiful, innocently deadly cat that people can't keep their hands off. Silent.—*Pauline Kael* (Anthology Film Archives; Nov. 18 and Nov. 20.)

THE POLAR EXPRESS
Chris Van Allsburg's twenty-nine-page picture book about a young boy's travels to the North Pole to meet Santa Claus gets an expanded, expensive telling in Robert Zemeckis's Christmas bauble. The film is a hybrid of sorts—a computer-animated movie filmed with live actors in a process called "performance capture." This technique makes for a gorgeous holiday card (the digital backgrounds twinkle and shine) but the look of the "captured" characters is something of a disappointment. Tom Hanks (in a number of roles) and the other actors do a nice job of voicing their parts, but the waxy animated faces they've been given are off-putting. It's a bit like watching mannequins act.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 24, Kips Bay Theatre, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

THE POOR LITTLE RICH GIRL
Magical. This 1917 Mary Pickford vehicle, directed by Maurice Tourneur, had a profound influence on the script for "The Wizard of Oz." At the climax, the wealthy yet unhappy young heroine suffers a drug-induced bad dream, putting various family service providers in fantasy guises that reveal their true natures. Pickford, like Garland, is wonderful at being childish while creating her own poetic intensification of childhood.—*M.S.* (Moving Image; Nov. 20.)

RAY
Swaying from side to side, his back arched almost to the point of snapping, Jamie Foxx, as Ray Charles, seems pulled upward to the heavens and downward to the keys at the same time. This intelligent and tough-minded bio-pic, written by James L. White and Taylor Hackford and directed by Hackford, tells us a lot about Charles, but it doesn't tell us everything. Though properly awed by Charles's talent, "Ray" refuses to get chummy or possessive. The movie picks up Charles's story in the late forties, when he's an ambitious but wary teen-age musician, and carries him through his musical innovations and his personal pleasures and torments until 1964, when he's a world-famous artist and a miserable heroin addict. There's something both joyous and demonic about this guy, an insatiable energy in his insistence on driving soul and country sounds into the beats of R. & B. For many older people in the audience, the sound of Ray Charles's music is inseparable from memories of dating, dancing, lovemaking, and loss. The movie has the bold good grace to honor the enraptured kids they once were and the sterner but still hungry grownups they became.—*D.D.* (11/8/04) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SIDEWAYS
Paul Giamatti has no chin to speak of, a round-shouldered physique, and the nervous smile of a craven dog. He's the anti-ideal of the American male, and he's making a brilliant career of it. In this wonderful new movie by the team of Alexander Payne (writer-director) and Jim Taylor (co-writer), Giamatti plays Miles, a failed novelist around forty who takes off for a wine-tasting tour with his buddy Jack (Thomas Haden Church), a washed-up TV actor who is about to get married. What starts as a last fling at freedom becomes for the two men—but centrally for Miles—a confrontation with middle age and stasis. Miles is a bibliophile, a cinephile, and an oenophile. Jack, however, couldn't care less—in every way, he's blissfully undiscriminating. On the road, the men meet Maya (Virginia Madsen), a divorced graduate student who works as a waitress, and Stephanie (Sandra Oh), a sexy "pour girl." The music and the camera setups are at times pedestrian, but the rest of "Sideways" is vivid and bitterly funny.—*D.D.* (10/25/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

TARNATION
"Notes from the Underground" hits the age of the iMac, and it's not a pretty sight. Jonathan Caouette is a young Texan filmmaker who was raised in dismaying, sometimes brutal, circumstances and who has now trawled through them for evidence. The result is part trip, part secret journal, spliced together into a lurid public memorandum. We learn of his mother, Renee, who, by the time she bore Jonathan, in the early nineteen-seventies, had already suffered electroshock treatment and a violent marriage. Her son was farmed out to foster parents, who maintained the cycle of harm. There is one scene in which, as a boy of eleven, he stages a plaintive drag act, and, watching it, you can barely imagine a more disturbed child; whether such disturbance makes for coherent, let alone tactful, filmmaking is another question. There are moments of graphic beauty here (Gus Van Sant, unsurprisingly, was the executive producer), but also smears of unpleasantness; if the middle-aged, once radiant Renee is now a picture of emotional damage, is it right for a loving son to trap her ravings on camera and put them on show?—*A.L.* (10/18/04) (Film Forum.)

VERA DRAKE
In its limited way, perfect. The title character in Mike Leigh's new movie is a middle-aged cleaning lady (Imelda Staunton) who races through her London working-class neighborhood singing to herself. The time is 1950, and though the dark and depressed city still suffers from wartime austerities Vera brings the light. The short, pudding-faced woman drops in on invalids, offers a few words of sympathy, and then makes her way to the luxurious flats of the wealthy, whose objets d'art and fireplace grills she dusts and polishes, sometimes on her knees. Vera gives of herself freely and easily, and it is precisely in that selfless and attentive way—brisk, efficient, consoling—that, using a tube and a noxious solution, she terminates one unwanted pregnancy after another. Working with an almost preternatural calm, Leigh sets up the repressive and sexually inarticulate atmosphere of the time; Vera's furtive activity is part of an entire system of shadowy reticence and embarrassed dithering. And Leigh captures, without sentimentality or condescension, the grave and stoical spirit of the English working class. The movie is hushed and intense; it evokes an entire way of life. With Phil Davis as Vera's husband, Stan. Photographed, with immaculate fidelity to a dun-colored London, by Dick Pope.—*D.D.* (10/11/04) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema 2, Empire 25, and Lincoln Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

BRIDGET JONES: THE EDGE OF REASON
East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25,
Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6,
and Village Theatre VII.

FINDING NEVERLAND
Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25,
Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6,
and Village Theatre VII.

I ♥ HUCKABEES (10/4/04)
BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Beekman,
Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd
Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square,
and Village Theatre VII.

KINSEY
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.

THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES (9/27/04)
Battery Park 11, East 86th Street Cinemas,
Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay
Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street
East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Greek cinema. Nov. 19 at 7:30: "Atlas: All the Weight of the World" (2003, Thanos Anastopoulos). ♦ Through Dec. 12: Films made in Fort Lee, New Jersey. Nov. 20 at 2: Biograph shorts (1908-13). ♦ Nov. 20 at 4: "The Poor Little Rich Girl" (†). ♦ Nov. 21 at 2: "He Did and He Didn't" (1916, Fatty Arbuckle) and two other shorts. ♦ Nov. 21 at 4: "La Vie de Bohème" (1916, Albert Capellani). ♦ Repertory nights. Nov. 20-21 at 6:30: "Tokyo Story" (1953, Yasujiro Ozu; in Japanese).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—New filmmakers. Nov. 18 at 7: Arielle Javitch's short "No One," a dance meditation on genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda, and three other shorts. ♦ Nov. 18 at 8: "Burning Annie" (2004, Randolph Mack). ♦ Through Nov. 21: "German Cinema: Silent Into Sound." Nov. 18 and Nov. 20 at 7: "Metropolis" (1927, Fritz Lang). ♦ Nov. 18 and Nov. 20 at 9:30: "Pandora's Box" (†). ♦ Nov. 19 at 7 and Nov. 21 at 6:30: "M" (1931, Lang). ♦ Nov. 19 at 9:30 and Nov. 21 at 9: "The Blue Angel" (1930, Josef von Sternberg). ♦ Nov. 20 at 4:30: "The Threepenny Opera" (1931, G. W. Pabst). ♦ Nov. 21 at 4:30: "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (1919, Robert Weine).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—"Cinema Tropical." Nov. 17 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Herod's Law" (2000, Luis Estrada; in Spanish). ♦ A Jim Jarmusch retrospective. Nov. 18 at 7:30: "The Year of the Horse" (1997). ♦ Nov. 19 at 2, 4:30, 6:45, and 9:15: "Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai" (1999). ♦ "Muppets, Music, and Magic," a celebration of Jim Henson's legacy. See www.bam.org for special guest appearances and morning screenings for children. Nov. 20 at 1:30: "Muppets Take Manhattan" (1984, Frank Oz). ♦ Nov. 20 at 4:30: "The Muppet Movie" (1979, James Frawley). ♦ Nov. 20 at 6:50: "Commercials & Experiments." ♦ Nov. 20 at 9:30: "Labyrinth" (1986, Jim Henson). ♦ Nov. 21 at 4:30: "Muppet History 101." ♦ Nov. 21 at 6:50: "Dog City" (1989) and "Storyteller: The Soldier and Death" (1987, Henson). ♦ Nov. 21 at 9:30: "The Dark Crystal" (1982, Henson and Oz). ♦ The films of Luchino Visconti. Nov. 22 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Days of Glory" (1945; in Italian).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Nov. 17-18 at 1:30, 5:10, and 8:20: "The Big Red One" (†). ♦ Nov. 19-23 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Days of Being Wild" (†).

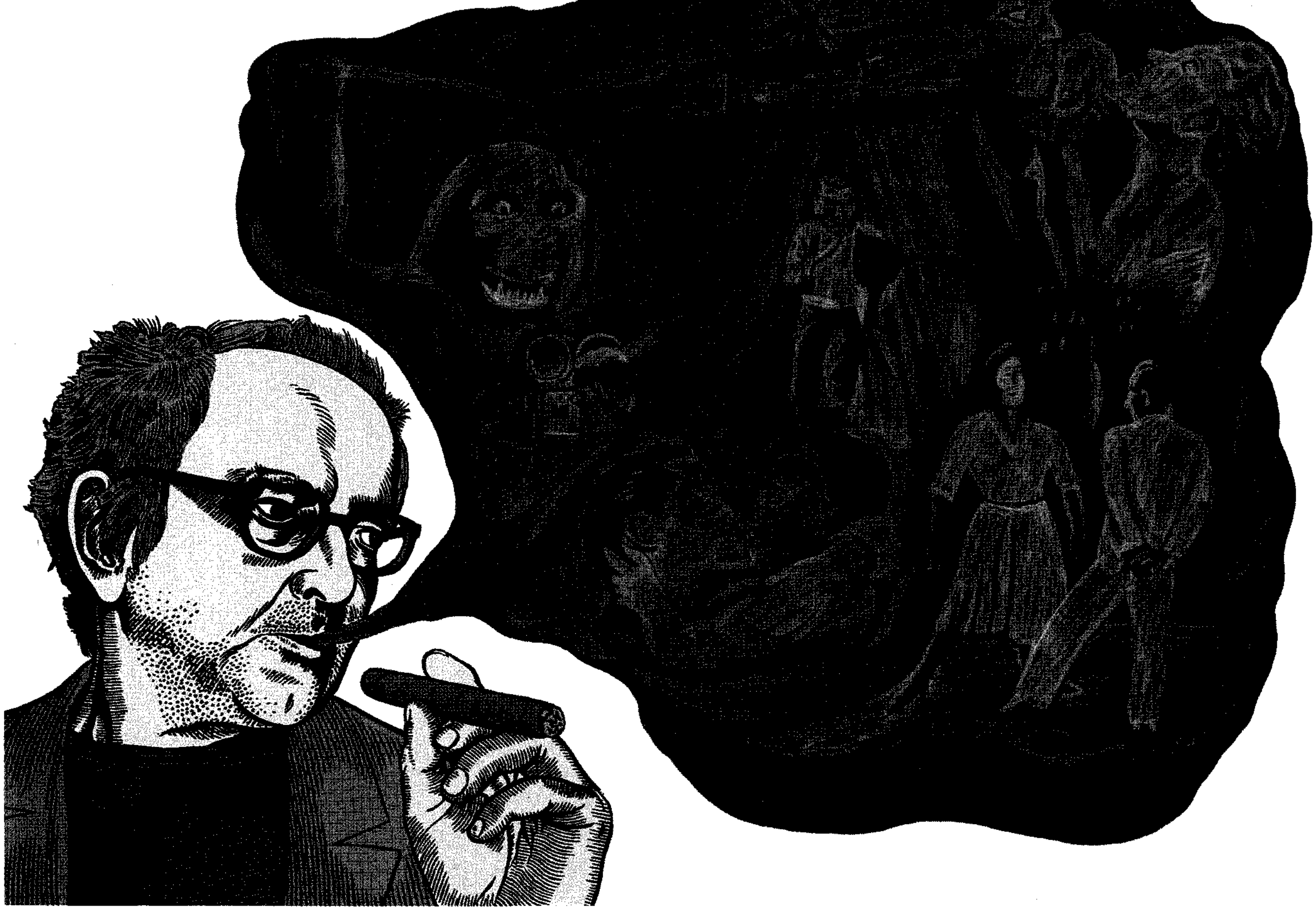
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Dec. 21: "Sisters: Dorléac and Deneuve." Nov. 23 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Creatures" (1969, Agnès Varda; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Made at MOMA," a one-day celebration of films that were shot either inside or outside the museum. Nov. 20 at 2: "Moving Day at the Museum" (1937, Ione Ulrich Sutton) and "Lovers and Lollipops" (1955, Morris Engel and Ruth Orkin). ♦ Nov. 20 at 5: "Architectural Millinery" (1952, Sidney Peterson) and "Shadows" (1961, John Cassavetes). ♦ Nov. 20 at 7:30: "Breaking It Up at the Museum" (1960, D. A. Pennebaker) and "Manhattan" (1979, Woody Allen). ♦ Special screening. Nov. 20 at 2:30: "Empire" (1964, Andy Warhol). ♦ Starting Nov. 20: "Premières," new films and recent restorations. Nov. 20 at 2: "Five" (2004, Abbas Kiarostami). ♦ Nov. 20 at 2:30: "ItalianAmerican" (1974, Martin Scorsese). ♦ Nov. 20 at 5: "Moments Choisis des Histoire(s) du Cinéma" (2004, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ Nov. 20 at 5:30: "Sandra" (1965, Luchino Visconti; in Italian). ♦ Nov. 22 at 6:15: "Stones" (2003, Raphaël Nadjari; in Hebrew). ♦ Nov. 22 at 8:45: "Recruits in Ingolstadt" (1970, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Nov. 19-20: "Goldfinger" (†).

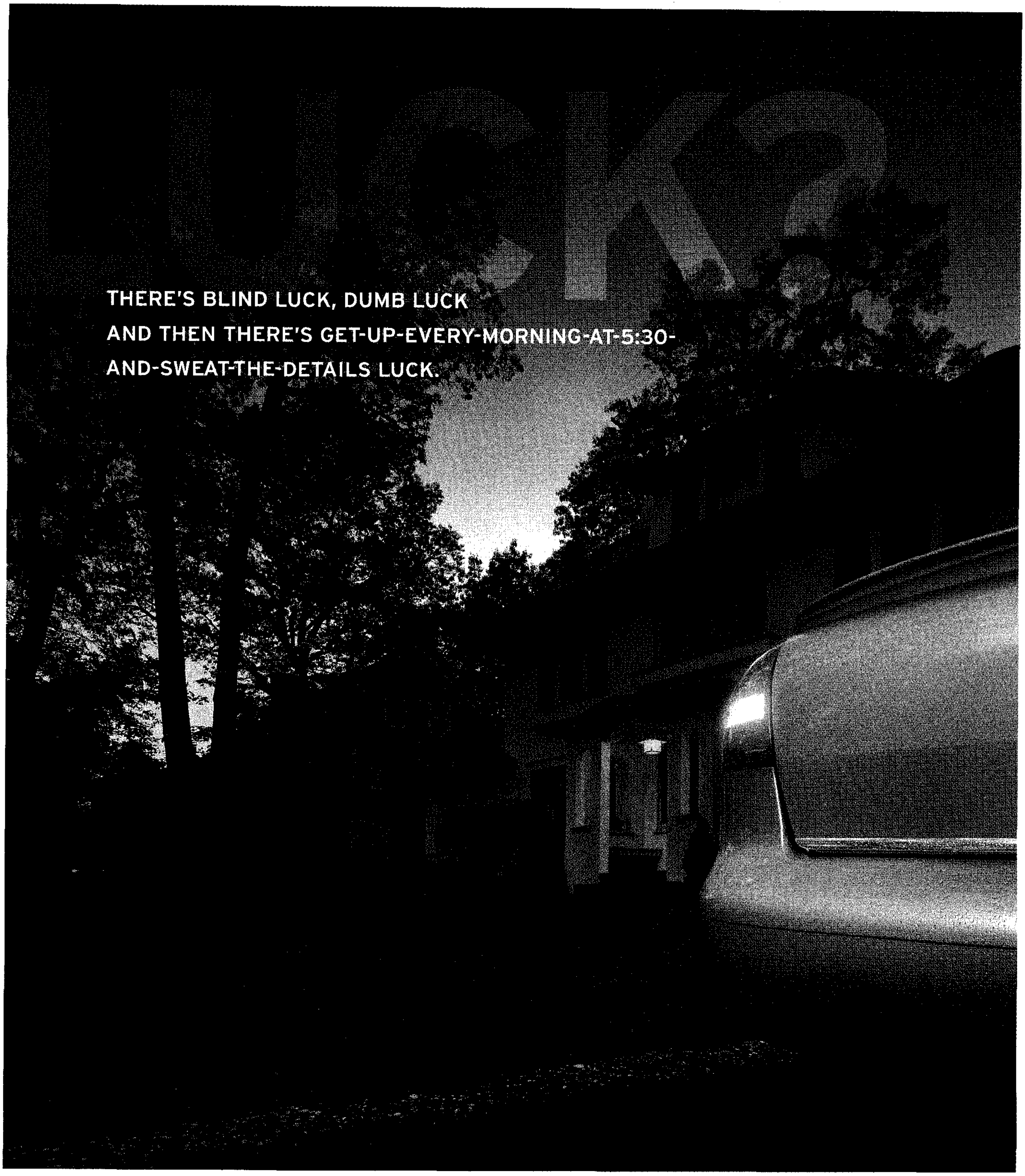
THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—Through Nov. 28: "The Golden Age of Mexican Melodramas." All films are in Spanish. Nov. 20 at 6: "Las Abandonadas" (1945, Emilio Fernández). ♦ Nov. 21 at 1: "El (This Strange Passion)" (1953, Luis Buñuel).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Dec. 7: "The Newest Tiger: Sixty Years of South Korean Cinema." Nov. 17 at 2: "The Housemaid" (1960, Kim Ki-young). ♦ Nov. 17 at 4:10 and 8:45: "Madame Freedom" (1956, Han Hyong-mo). ♦ Nov. 17 at 6:40: "Aimless Bullet" (1961, Yu Hyonmok). ♦ Nov. 18 at 2: "Peppermint Candy" (2000, Lee Chang-dong). ♦ Nov. 18 at 4:15 and 8:45: "Our Twisted Hero" (1992, Park Chong-won). ♦ Nov. 18 at 6:40: "To the Starry Island" (1993, Park Kwang-su). ♦ Nov. 21 at 1:30 and Nov. 23 at 6: "Cinema on the Road" (1995, Jang Sun-woo). ♦ Nov. 21 at 5 and 9: "Marriage Story" (1992, Kim Eui-sok). ♦ Nov. 21 at 7: "The Hidden Hero" (1979, Im Kwon-taek). ♦ Nov. 23 at 2 and 7:15: "Flowers in Hell" (1958, Shin Sang-ok). ♦ Nov. 23 at 3:45 and 9: "The Houseguest and My Mother" (1961, Shin).



At MOMA, the première of Jean-Luc Godard's elegiac collage of film history "Moments Choisis des Histoire(s) du Cinéma."

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN


LUCK?
THERE'S BLIND LUCK, DUMB LUCK
AND THEN THERE'S GET-UP-EVERY-MORNING-AT-5:30-
AND-SWEAT-THE-DETAILS LUCK.

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
THE OLD MAN

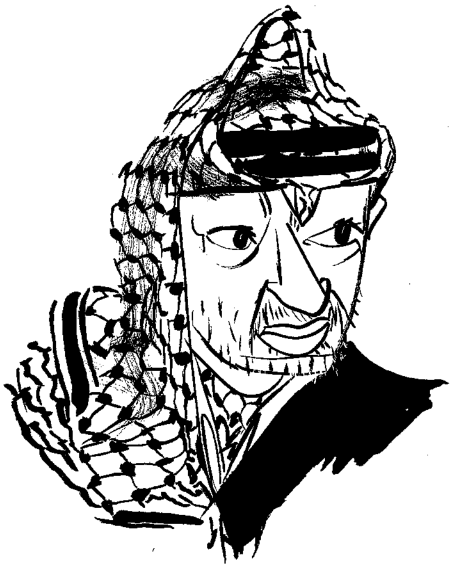
Modest in his personal habits and his material desires, Yasir Arafat was grandiose only in his sense of mission. By bringing low "the Zionist entity," he would win the most glorious Muslim victory since the noble Saladin drove the Crusaders out of Jerusalem. Then, having restored the city to Arab rule, he would go to his rest in the sacred soil of the grounds of the Al Aksa Mosque.

History had other ideas. Last week, in the Paris suburb of Clamart, a French general named Christian Estripeau stood in front of the cameras and announced, "M. Yasir Arafat, president of the Palestinian Authority, died at the Percy Military Training Hospital in Clamart on November 11, 2004, at three-thirty." French privacy laws prevented him from disclosing the medical details.

And so, after half a century of armed struggle and tactical diplomacy, the figure Palestinians called Al Khityar, "the Old Man," died—not in Jerusalem, or even in Abu Dis, but in a modern clinic in the heart of Europe. The funeral was in Cairo. The burial was in Ramallah, ten miles from Jerusalem—the longest ten miles in the Middle East.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

After Arafat founded the Fatah organization, in 1957, he began crafting the cruder instruments of political modernity, a bloody influence that today is everywhere. He was hardly the inventor of terrorism—countless practitioners preceded him, including two who became Israeli prime ministers, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir—but he was an innovator, and never left terror behind. He combined technology (he had been a demolitions expert for Egypt in the Suez War of 1956) with a gift for media spectacle and political timing. Either on his orders or with his artfully ambiguous assent, commandos and ordinary people mastered the arts of hijacking, kidnapping, massacre, car bombing, bus bombing, and suicide bombing. With a nod, he could halt an Olympiad or turn an Israeli election. Ma'alot, Black September, Munich, Lod Airport, Entebbe, Kibbutz Eyal junction, French Hill: these are a few of the resonant moments. The spasms of violence had led, in recent years, to a cult of death in parts of Palestinian society, a psychology of ecstatic martyrdom reinforced so thoroughly in Gaza and elsewhere that no successor will likely reverse it for years to come. After a suicide bombing at a Tel Aviv disco, Arafat told the killer's family, and, by extension, the Palestinian people, that the young man "who turned his body into a bomb is the model of manhood and sacrifice for the sake of Allah and the homeland." This was in 2001, seven years after he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize.



But even the most skeptical historian will have to admit that, between the rise of Fatah and the signing of the Oslo accords, in 1993, Arafat came to embody something that the Israelis and much of the Western world had cynically dismissed: Palestinian suffering and a Palestinian national identity. Especially in the years after the Six-Day War, in 1967, Israeli triumphalism and self-righteousness left no room for the admission that seven hundred thousand Palestinians had fled or been driven from their land in 1948, and that the unending occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, along with the accelerating construction of settlements there, amounted to a moral failure that could not be excused or ignored.

Arafat's capacity for organization, maneuvering, deception, and the projection of himself as an icon of Palestinian identity insured that his people would not be forgotten. Arafat was the great semiotician of the Middle East, and his supreme creation was himself, the "father of the Palestinian people." He told interviewers that he was born in Jerusalem (or Gaza) when in fact he was born in Cairo, and he spoke with an Egyptian accent all his life. Arafat's public presentation—the beard, the fatigues, the pistol, the kaffiyeh folded, he claimed, in the triangular shape of Palestine—was unique; no one, even in his circle of lieutenants, looked like him.

Although he was a devout Muslim and as a young man had close contact with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Arafat seemed, at first, to play the role not of an Islamist soldier but of a Palestinian Che Guevara. His rhetoric was blunt. "Peace for us means Israel's destruction and nothing else," he told the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci in 1970. With time, ambiguity became a more important weapon. But, even as he adapted to the language of international diplomacy, he kept the dream of absolutism alive at home. In 1989, a year after recognizing Israel's right to exist, he said that he was seeking not the peace of compromise but "the peace of Saladin"—a peace in which the Other is vanquished.

Rarely has a leader blundered more, left more ruin in his wake, and courted death more ardently. Yet Arafat survived, and his people's claims grew more prominent. A Palestinian state, which had once seemed beyond imagining, became a diplomatic commonplace, a given, a stipulation—everything but a reality. Arafat's tactical sense, combined with the Israeli capacity to fuel Palestinian rage, guaranteed that even in his worst and weakest periods the cause persisted as both a strategic irritant and a moral requirement.

Between the signing of the Oslo agreements and the collapse of the Camp David negotiations, in 2000, neither side did much to create the level of trust that might have led to a final two-state pact. Israel nearly doubled the number of settlements, situating them in a way that would maximally haunt a Palestinian future, and strangled the Palestinian economy. Arafat, for his part, did not seriously combat terror as he had promised; on the contrary, under the banners of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Arafat's own armed factions, terror developed and advanced. He failed to build institutions of basic public order, administration, or power-sharing. He ruled the West Bank and Gaza as his fief, personally controlling accounts filled with billions in foreign money and doling out lucrative concessions to his deputies and millions in cash to his wife.

The logic of events and the morality of the Palestinian claim dawned only slowly on most Israelis, but certainly by the time of the Camp David summit only a minority failed to see that security would be most threatened by the lack, not the presence, of a Palestinian state. To this day, there is debate over why Arafat rejected the proposals at Camp David and, later, at Taba, without even making a serious counter-offer. The core proposal—a demilitarized Palestinian state comprising all of Gaza and connected by highway or tunnel to at least ninety-two per cent of the West Bank; a capital in East Jerusalem; and a means of sharing the Old City and the area around the Western Wall and the Al Aksa Mosque—was surely not everything Arafat wanted when he started out, but it was, even for some in his own retinue, a livable compromise, a future.

Arafat, however, faced a Draconian choice. On the one hand, he could dispense with his dreams of driving out the Zionists and become the leader of the thirteenth-largest Arab state, a leader who would have to forgo the life of a media-age revolutionary and spend his remaining years dealing with matters of road-building, sewage, agronomy, tax collection—the tedious business of governance. At the same time, he would have to confront his people with the limitations of their future, particularly the divided status of Jerusalem and Israel's refusal to commit demographic suicide by absorbing the Palestinian refugees from abroad. Inherent in the first choice, too, as Arafat confessed to Bill Clinton, was the possibility that, like King Abdullah of Jordan and Anwar Sadat of Egypt, he could be assassinated for the offense of having made peace with Israel.

The alternative was the temptation of permanent resistance and popularity. Arafat saw compromise as a trap, one that would bring an end to the perquisites of romantic struggle and deprive him of absolute victory and the glory of his hero, Saladin. Rejection, not acceptance, would enlarge him and keep the old mythologies alive.

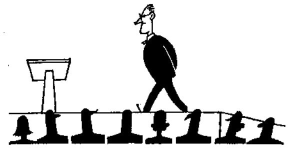
Having chosen rejection, Arafat returned to the nihilism of armed struggle, this time with a far greater emphasis on the lexicon and imagery of Islam. The "Al Aksa" intifada began, and the result has been more than a thousand dead Israelis, almost three thousand dead Palestinians, collapsed diplomacy, a "peace" fence, and a growing sense on both sides that the Other is never again to be trusted.

This is Arafat's tragic and disorienting legacy. In the near term, even as Ariel Sharon begins a disengagement from Gaza, how can a Palestinian leader such as Mahmoud Abbas, who has none of the symbolic magnetism of Arafat, dare to make compromises that the Old Man rejected? It is for Arafat's mourners that one's sympathy should be reserved, and Israel, the United States, and Europe ought to do what they can to re-start the process of negotiation, and to support any sign of renewed pragmatism among the Palestinian leaders. At the same time, Sharon's withdrawal from Gaza cannot be accepted as an end but only as a preface to a similar exit from the West Bank. In the past quarter-century, a succession of remarkable and unexpectedly imaginative statesmen—Sadat and Rabin in the Middle East, de Klerk and, perhaps above all, Nelson Mandela in South Africa—emerged to leave their peoples and their world better than they found them. Like Mandela, Arafat was acclaimed the father of his country. But, unlike him, he failed to provide his people with the patrimony they deserve.

—*David Remnick*

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY DEPT.

NOWHERE



Larry Kramer delivered a long and fiery speech at Cooper Union last Sunday night. That, of course, was nothing new. Kramer, the playwright who founded the activist group ACT UP and was the signature voice of the age of AIDS, is famous for his fury: once, he and thousands of his supporters invaded St. Patrick's Cathedral during Mass; another time, they wrapped Jesse Helms's house in a giant yellow condom. Over the years, they hounded pharmaceutical companies and the government into developing and providing drugs and treatments.

In the early days of AIDS, straight people disliked Kramer for his aggressive honesty and gays ridiculed him for what they saw as his prissiness about sex, but now, at sixty-nine, he seems to have outlived the animosity of both groups. He has also outlived almost all of his friends. "It's funny," the playwright Tony Kushner said recently. "These days, audiences are fond of Larry. They seem wistful. Can you imagine that? Being wistful about Larry?"

Kramer surprises people who have seen him screeching on television or have read one of his radioactive e-mails. In conversation, he tends to speak so softly that one has to lean in to hear him. At Cooper Union, Kramer wore his usual uniform: overalls and a sweater with an American flag on it, over a red turtleneck. He looked stooped, old. He spoke for more than an hour, at the same lectern that Abraham Lincoln (who Kramer ceaselessly insists was gay) used when he addressed New Yorkers, in 1860. On Sunday night, the Great Hall was full; hundreds of people were turned away.

The speech, entitled "The Tragedy of Today's Gays," began with a dire assessment of the Presidential election. "I hope we all realize that, as of November 2nd, gay rights are officially dead," Kramer said. "And that from here on we are going to be led even closer to the guillotine. Almost sixty million people whom we live and work with every day think we are immoral. 'Moral values' was at the top of many lists of why people supported George Bush. Not Iraq. Not the economy. Not terrorism. 'Moral values.' In case you need a translation, that means us."

But Kramer has never been harder on others than he has been on homosexuals themselves. It is the main reason that he has occasionally been dismissed as a febrile modern version of Cotton Mather. "I know many people look to me for answers," he went on. "Perhaps that is why many of you are here. You want answers? We're living in pig shit, and it's up to each one of us to figure out how to get out of it." By pig shit, he meant, more or less, a heedless life of unprotected sex and crystal-meth addiction. "It takes hard work to behave like an adult," he continued. "It takes discipline. You want it to be simple. It isn't simple. Yes, it is. Grow up. Behave responsibly. Fight for your rights. Take care of yourself and each other. These are the answers. It takes courage to live."

He went on, "Does it occur to you that we brought this plague of AIDS upon ourselves? I know I am getting into dangerous waters here, but it is time. With the cabal breathing even more murderously down our backs, it is time. And you are still doing it: you are still murdering each other. . . . From the very first moment we were told, in 1981, that the suspected cause was a virus, gay men have refused to accept responsibility for choosing not to listen, and, starting in 1984, when we were told it definitely was a virus, this behavior turned murderous."

A few weeks earlier, there had been a tribute to Kramer at the 92nd Street Y, produced by Kushner. On that evening, actors read from Kramer's novel "Faggots," from his plays "The Normal Heart" and "The Destiny of Me," and from other works, including his prescient 1983 essay "1,112 and Counting," in which he asked, incredulously, how many more people would have to die before gays got serious about AIDS. That was, roughly, seventy million infections ago.

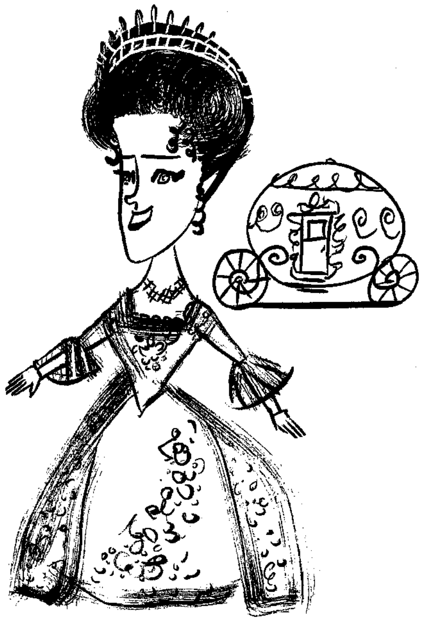
"I guess if you live long enough people give up and accept you," Kramer said that night, with something approaching giddiness. "I got invited to the National Cancer Institute, to a conference that is so high-level I don't even understand the topics. And Harvard just called."

Kramer understands, however, that acceptance doesn't mean much, in the scheme of things, since it seems not to extend to gay people in general. "Nobody listens to us," Kramer said at Cooper Union. "There is not a single person in Washington who will get us or give us anything but shit and more shit. I'm sorry. This is where we are now. Nowhere."

—*Michael Specter*

REVIVALS
CINDERELLA STORY

So you want to be a princess. Well, you'll have to come up with something a little less ambitious, like duchess or viscountess, because, for all the recent talk about how "we're moving in the right direction" on the job front in this country, at the moment the one princess position in the metropolitan area is filled, by Sarah Uriarte Berry, who plays the title role in the New York City Opera production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Cinderella."



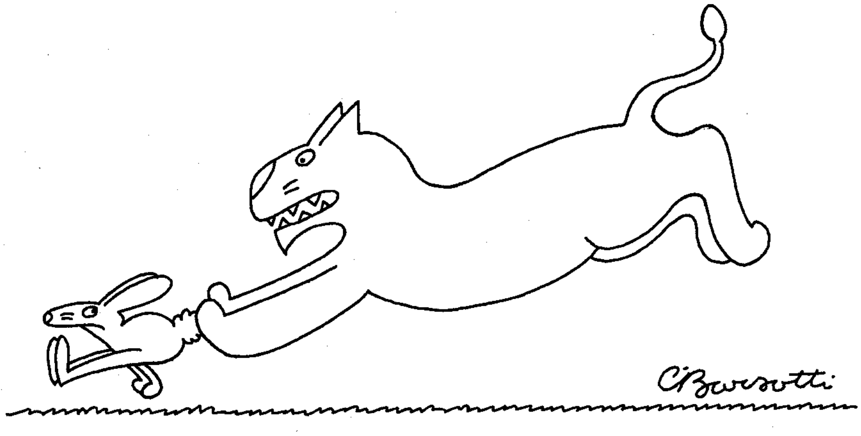
The musical, which was originally written for TV, in 1957, as a vehicle for Julie Andrews (who at the time was also starring in "My Fair Lady" on Broadway), is an uncomplicated version of the fairy tale, with no sociological overtones or psychosexual undertones, just pleasantly comic middle tones and optimistic tunes of romance. Only one song, a ballad with the opening lines "Do I love you because you're beautiful, or are you beautiful because I love you?," gets into any kind of murky, epistemological area. The City Opera production, which runs through this weekend at the State Theatre, has stayed faithful to the original, without any smarty-pants updating: the prince doesn't Google Cinderella, and she doesn't use a Roomba to clean the ashes from the fireplace. But there are still plenty of bits of funny business to go around, and the cast is made up of performers who can make the most of them: Lea DeLaria and Ana Gasteyer, who play the sour stepsisters; Renée Taylor and Dick Van Patten, as the king and queen; John Epperson (better known as Lypsinka, the nonpareil channeller of Joan Crawford, Dolores Gray, Lana Turner, and other grand ladies of the screen), as the wicked stepmother; and—*ggrrrrrroooooowwww*—Eartha Kitt, as Cinderella's fairy godmother. Rounding out the ensemble is Christopher Sieber, who, having played two princes in recent years, in "Triumph of Love" and the 2002 revival of "Into the Woods," seems to be monopolizing the unthreateningly-handsome-prince market on New York stages.

Two weeks before the show went up, the cast was rehearsing in a large, stage-sized room at the State Theatre, which had chairs along each wall and tables holding the typical accoutrements of performers at work: bottles of water, a plastic bag of apple chunks that were darkening to autumn brown, Starbucks cups, and the orange that travels around the world to all rehearsals and study sessions and school cafeterias and never gets eaten. Cinderella, in dark-gray sweats and sneakers, went over a scene with two young actors playing mice, who scurried around on their knees with their elbows and hands crooked as Cinderella fantasized in song about a better life, while sitting "in my own little corner in my own little chair." The show's director and choreographer, Baayork Lee, sat at one of the tables and smiled, while the stage manager stopped the rehearsal a couple of times to tell Cinderella and the mice where to go.

Working on "Cinderella" is a kind of homecoming for Lee. She began taking dancing lessons at the age of three, when she was growing up in Chinatown, and in 1951, as a five-year-old attending the Transfiguration school, on Mott Street, she was chosen, along with several other Chinese children, to appear in the original production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "The King and I," in which she played Princess Ying Yaowalak. Seven years later, she appeared in R. & H.'s "Flower Drum Song." She said that Rodgers and Hammerstein were "the gods of the theatre," and remembers that they came often to rehearsals, and that they both, especially Rodgers, "had a lot to say about the way we sang it." When she was in her twenties, Lee, whose first name, she said, means "precious jewel," originated the role of Connie in "A Chorus Line." "I *was* Connie Wong," Lee said. "She's a short Asian—she's four foot ten. It's the story of my life—I wanted to be a ballerina. I wanted to be Maria Tallchief, and I studied at the School of American Ballet for so many years." Lee played Connie for three years, and then went on to direct all the foreign "Chorus Line" companies.

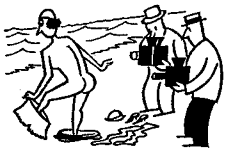
After the rehearsal, Berry, who grew up knowing the Disney version of "Cinderella," said that she had wanted to play the part since she was four. "Every girl wants to be Cinderella, and have a Cinderella experience, at some point, especially at that awkward junior-high-school phase," she said. Epperson was having a Cinderella experience, too. He had wanted to play the part of the wicked stepmother and, without having to lift a finger, had been asked to audition for it. "I worked for years at American Ballet Theatre as a rehearsal pianist," he said. "From the basement of the Met to the stage of the City Opera—it only took me twenty-six years to cross the plaza."

—*Nancy Franklin*



"What are you complaining about? It's a level playing field."

AT THE GALLERIES
UNZIPPED



The sound of two worlds colliding can be, and sometimes is, as harmonious as the sound of one hand clapping. And, indeed, on a recent Saturday night no jarring dissonances marred the densely crowded opening of "XXX: 30 Porn-Star Portraits," an exhibition by the photographer Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, at the Mary Boone gallery, in Chelsea. Artists, collectors, literati, and other art-world regulars appeared to mingle seamlessly with adult-movie producers and directors, agents, and quite a few of the performers whose full-color likenesses, many of them life-size (or almost) and half of them frontally nude, should have stopped conversation in its tracks but, for some reason, did not. The thirty portraits reflected a democratic cross-section of the adult-film industry—female and male, gay and straight, white and black, young and not so young. Each star was represented twice, clothed and unclothed, assuming the same pose for both shots—a device that Greenfield-Sanders says he borrowed from Goya's clothed and unclothed paintings of his eighteenth-century *maja*. Unlike Goya, however, Greenfield-Sanders excised from his images any hint of pornographic suggestiveness: no erotic poses or come-hither looks, no parted lips, no discreetly listed Web sites. We are in an art gallery, these portraits proclaimed, so this must be art.

Formalist standards of art criticism are in decline these days, and will not be applied here. Let's just say that Jenna Jameson, the reigning goddess of porn cinema, looks considerably more convincing nude than clothed, while the opposite may be true of Tera Patrick. Also, that Briana Banks, who agreed to Greenfield-Sanders's suggestion that she adopt the pose of Cézanne's "Bather," makes a very good try but doesn't quite succeed, and that Ron Jeremy, whose résumé shows that he has appeared in "more than 1,750 films," could handle the "Laocoön" without batting an eye. Copies of "XXX: 30 Porn-Star Portraits," the book, were on sale at the opening, with texts by Gore Vidal, John Malkovich, A. M. Homes, John Waters, Salman Rushdie, Lou Reed, and other famous moralists; the stars graciously autographed the portraits in it, and engaged in lively conversations about the empowering experience of taking charge of their own sexuality. The same points crop up in many of the brief autobiographical essays that the stars contributed to the book. "Before doing porn, I spent five years on Wall Street as an equities and fixed-income stockbroker," writes Lexington Steele, who now produces, directs, and stars in such adult productions as "Top Guns" and "Lex on Blondes." "Do I ever look back? Well, I enjoyed the square world. I *do* miss the regimented environment that corporate America provides."

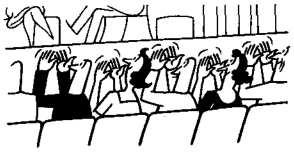
Spanning both worlds with effortless brio, Greenfield-Sanders, lean and stylish in a black Jil Sander suit, fielded compliments and made introductions. "Ben Stiller, meet Tawny Roberts! . . . Mary Boone, this is Chi-Chi LaRue. . . . Oh, and Nina Hartley! Nina is one of the biggest stars, as well as my introduction to so many others. She's one of the smartest people I've ever met—and I've photographed James Watson! In fact, he was going to come tonight, but I guess he didn't make it."

Greenfield-Sanders, who began photographing people in the arts with an eight-by-ten-inch Deardorf view camera in the nineteen-sixties, has become a star in his own right. Last year, the Museum of Modern Art acquired seven hundred of his art-world portraits. The images at Mary Boone are priced at thirty-five thousand dollars a pair. "I had to get over my own inhibitions," he said of shooting nudes. "But the stars made me feel comfortable. They're very proud of their bodies—can't wait to take their clothes off. These portraits are kind of heroic. I love the way they're hung slightly high in the gallery, so you're looking up at them."

With one or two exceptions, he said, the porn stars are happy being porn stars, and don't entertain fantasies of becoming the next Nicole Kidman or Brad Pitt. Jenna Jameson, whose book "How to Make Love Like a Porn Star" made the *Times* best-seller list, is probably the closest to crossing over, but she's also justly proud of the fact that *Adult Video News* has voted her the top female adult star of all time. Was she at the opening? No, said Greenfield-Sanders. She was working.

—*Calvin Tomkins*

THE BOARDS RESONATING



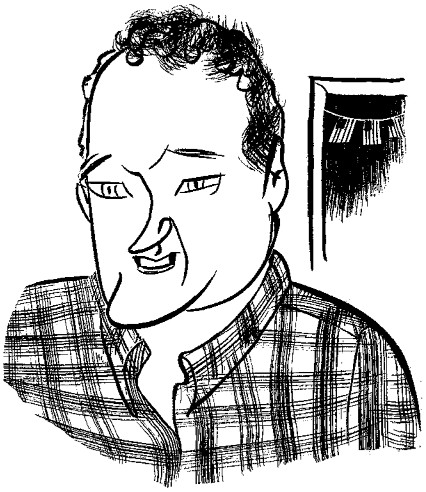
A few weeks ago, Sam Shepard's new play, "The God of Hell," was wrapping up rehearsals at the Actors Studio Drama School Theatre, in the Village. Randy Quaid and three other actors make up the cast.

"Sam calls 'The God of Hell' a comedy, but it takes a darker turn," Quaid said during a break. Sweaty and exuberant in his costume of jeans, plaid shirt, and work boots, he looked pretty much the same as the brig-bound young sailor he portrayed in "The Last Detail," in 1973. "I play a simple, innocent Wisconsin farmer, giving everybody the benefit of the doubt," he said. "All I want to do is feed my heifers. I'm putting up a friend—he's on the lam from a government plutonium experiment—in my basement. Then a government agent, Tim Roth, comes around questioning. Telling us we don't have enough American flags around! Invoking our patriotism! Programming mind control! Sound familiar?"

He took a large handkerchief from his pocket and mopped at his neck and forehead. "The play is zany and surreal," he said. "But it's grounded in reality, in scariness. It resonated with me politically." He went on, "Sam is very serious, but he doesn't take himself seriously. He just comes up with the goods. Sam doesn't rely too much on specifics. He isn't interested in explaining what's going on. He's just interested in creating these images. When I told him the play resonated with me politically, he just laughed and said, 'That's my wife's thing.' "

Quaid, who lives in Beverly Hills with his wife, Evi, explained that he had to develop a Wisconsin accent for his role as a dairy farmer. "I had to make my 'r's more pronounced," he said. "Wisconsinites talk from the front of their mouths, because they don't want to breathe in the cold."

Sam Shepard hadn't been at many of his play's rehearsals, because he'd been busy rehearsing himself, across town at the New York Theatre Workshop, where, later this month, he will appear in Caryl Churchill's new play, "A Number"—his first time onstage here in about thirty years. But he turned up at an early preview of "The God of Hell." After the performance, Shepard, his crew-cut hair now gone gray, and wearing his usual Chuck Yeagerish getup of leather jacket and jeans, slouched against a wall beside Quaid, who was perspiring heavily again, having been beaten and brainwashed onstage. Shepard regarded Quaid with approval.



Randy Quaid

"They got it, I think, what with the war in Iraq, the Patriot Act, and all," Quaid said of the audience. "Someone asked me, why the title?"

"Plutonium. Pluto was the god of Hell," Shepard said. "I got it out of a military book. They named all their missiles after the Greek gods."

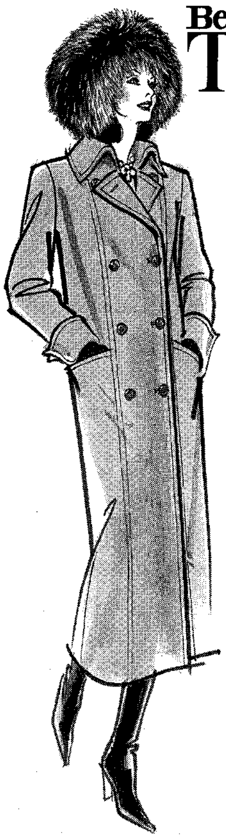
"Like Titan," Quaid said. "Is anybody in this play modelled on any of your relatives?"

"Relatives," Shepard said, and gave an uneven grin. "You never get away from them."

"Does this play resonate for you?" Quaid asked.

"Resonate?" Shepard said with impatience. "I don't bother with that, not when I get actors like you."

—*Lillian Ross*



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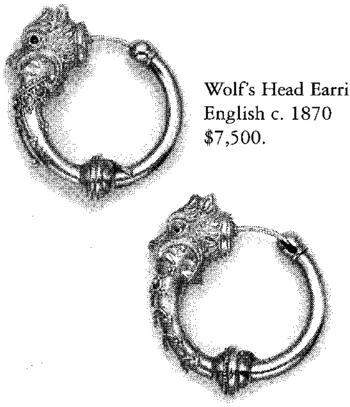

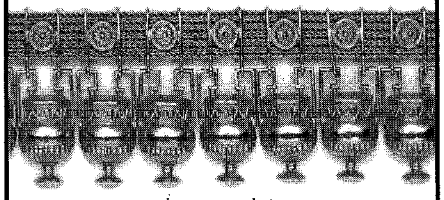

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ANNALS OF CULTURE

SOMETHING BORROWED

Should a charge of plagiarism ruin your life?

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

One day this spring, a psychiatrist named Dorothy Lewis got a call from her friend Betty, who works in New York City. Betty had just seen a Broadway play called "Frozen," written by the British playwright Bryony Lavery. "She said, 'Somehow it reminded me of you. You really ought to see it,'" Lewis recalled. Lewis asked Betty what the play was about, and Betty said that one of the characters was a psychiatrist who studied serial killers. "And I told her, 'I need to see that as much as I need to go to the moon.'"

Lewis has studied serial killers for the past twenty-five years. With her collaborator, the neurologist Jonathan Pincus, she has published a great many research papers, showing that serial killers tend to suffer from predictable patterns of psychological, physical, and neurological dysfunction: that they were almost all the victims of harrowing physical and sexual abuse as children, and that almost all of them have suffered some kind of brain injury or mental illness. In 1998, she published a memoir of her life and work entitled "Guilty by Reason of Insanity." She was the last person to visit Ted Bundy before he went to the electric chair. Few people in the world have spent as much time thinking about serial killers as Dorothy Lewis, so when her friend Betty told her that she needed to see "Frozen" it struck her as a busman's holiday.

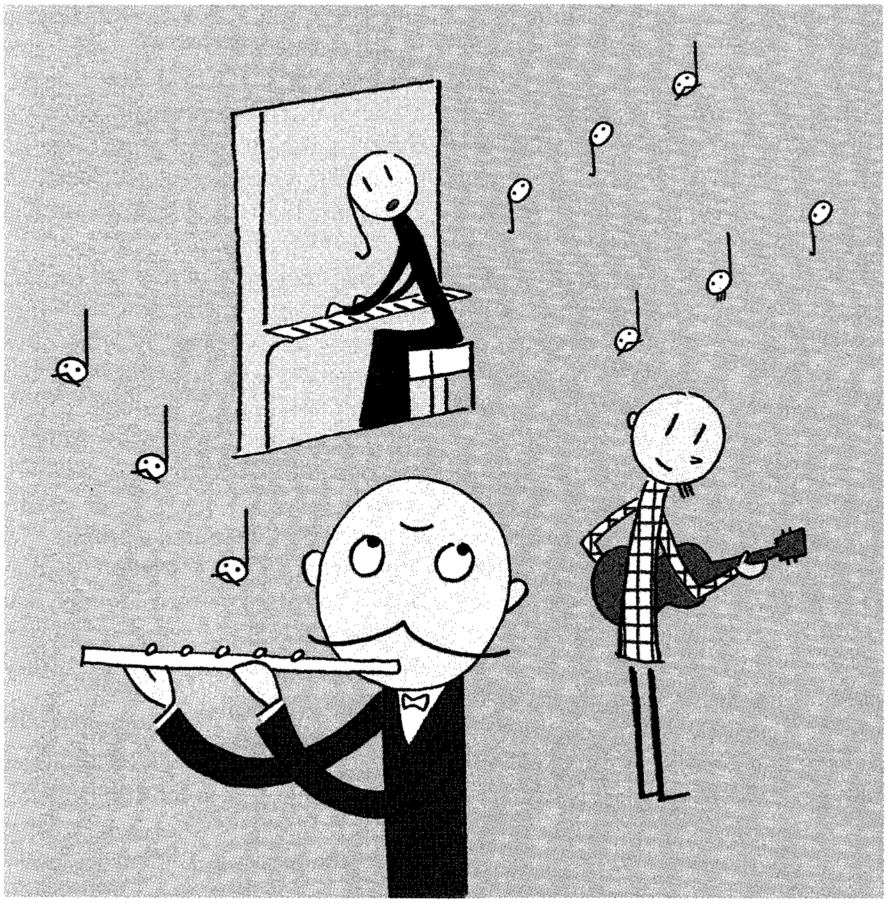
But the calls kept coming. "Frozen" was winning raves on Broadway, and it had been nominated for a Tony. Whenever someone who knew Dorothy Lewis saw it, they would tell her that she really ought to see it, too. In June, she got a call from a woman at the theatre where "Frozen" was playing. "She said she'd heard that I work in this field, and that I see murderers, and she was wondering if I would do a talk-back after the show," Lewis said. "I had done that once before, and it was a delight, so I said sure. And I said, would you please send me the script, because I wanted to read the play."

The script came, and Lewis sat down to read it. Early in the play, something caught her eye, a phrase: "it was one of those days." One of the murderers Lewis had written about in her book had used that same expression. But she thought it was just a coincidence. "Then, there's a scene of a woman on an airplane, typing away to her friend. Her name is Agnetha Gottmundsdottir. I read that she's writing to her colleague, a neurologist called David Nabkus. And with that I realized that more was going on, and I realized as well why all these people had been telling me to see the play."

Lewis began underlining line after line. She had worked at New York University School of Medicine. The psychiatrist in "Frozen" worked at New York School of Medicine. Lewis and Pincus did a study of brain injuries among fifteen death-row inmates. Gottmundsdottir and Nabkus did a study of brain injuries among fifteen death-row inmates. Once, while Lewis was examining the serial killer Joseph Franklin, he sniffed her, in a grotesque, sexual way. Gottmundsdottir is sniffed by the play's serial killer, Ralph. Once, while Lewis was examining Ted Bundy, she kissed him on the cheek. Gottmundsdottir, in some productions of "Frozen," kisses Ralph. "The whole thing was right there," Lewis went on. "I was sitting at home reading the play, and I realized that it was I. I felt robbed and violated in some peculiar way. It was as if someone had stolen—I don't believe in the soul, but, if there was such a thing, it was as if someone had stolen my essence."

Lewis never did the talk-back. She hired a lawyer. And she came down from New Haven to see "Frozen." "In my book," she said, "I talk about where I rush out of the house with my black carry-on, and I have two black pocketbooks, and the play opens with her"—Agnetha—"with one big black bag and a carry-on, rushing out to do a lecture." Lewis had written about biting her sister on the stomach as a child. Onstage, Agnetha fantasized out loud about attacking a stewardess on an airplane and "biting out her throat." After the play was over, the cast came onstage and took questions from the audience. "Somebody in the audience said, 'Where did Bryony Lavery get the idea for the psychiatrist?' " Lewis recounted. "And one of the cast members, the male lead, said, 'Oh, she said that she read it in an English medical magazine.' " Lewis is a tiny woman, with enormous, childlike eyes, and they were wide open now with the memory. "I wouldn't have cared if she did a play about a shrink who's interested in the frontal lobe and the limbic system. That's out there to do. I see things week after week on television, on 'Law & Order' or 'C.S.I.,' and I see that they are using material that Jonathan and I brought to light. And it's wonderful. That would have been acceptable. But she did more than that. She took things about my own life, and that is the part that made me feel violated."

At the request of her lawyer, Lewis sat down and made up a chart detailing what she felt were the questionable parts of Lavery's play. The chart was fifteen pages long. The first part was devoted to thematic similarities between "Frozen" and Lewis's book "Guilty by Reason of Insanity." The other, more damning section listed twelve instances of almost verbatim similarities—totalling perhaps six hundred and seventy-five words—between passages from "Frozen" and passages from a 1997 magazine profile of Lewis. The profile was called "Damaged." It appeared in the February 24, 1997, issue of *The New Yorker*. It was written by me.



Creative property has always had a tendency to escape the control of its creator.

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

Words belong to the person who wrote them. There are few simpler ethical notions than this one, particularly as society directs more and more energy and resources toward the creation of intellectual property. In the past thirty years, copyright laws have been strengthened. Courts have become more willing to grant intellectual-property protections. Fighting piracy has become an obsession with Hollywood and the recording industry, and, in the worlds of academia and publishing, plagiarism has gone from being bad literary manners to something much closer to a crime. When, two years ago, Doris Kearns Goodwin was found to have lifted passages from several other historians, she was asked to resign from the board of the Pulitzer Prize committee. And why not? If she had robbed a bank, she would have been fired the next day.

I'd worked on "Damaged" through the fall of 1996. I would visit Dorothy Lewis in her office at Bellevue Hospital, and watch the videotapes of her interviews with serial killers. At one point, I met up with her in Missouri. Lewis was testifying at the trial of Joseph Franklin, who claims responsibility for shooting, among others, the civil-rights leader Vernon Jordan and the pornographer Larry Flynt. In the trial, a videotape was shown of an interview that Franklin once gave to a television station. He was asked whether he felt any remorse. I wrote:

> "I can't say that I do," he said. He paused again, then added, "The only thing I'm sorry about is that it's not legal."
>
> "What's not legal?"
>
> Franklin answered as if he'd been asked the time of day: "Killing Jews."

That exchange, almost to the word, was reproduced in "Frozen."

Lewis, the article continued, didn't feel that Franklin was fully responsible for his actions. She viewed him as a victim of neurological dysfunction and childhood physical abuse. "The difference between a crime of evil and a crime of illness," I wrote, "is the difference between a sin and a symptom." That line was in "Frozen," too—not once but twice. I faxed Bryony Lavery a letter:

> I am happy to be the source of inspiration for other writers, and had you asked for my permission to quote—even liberally—from my piece, I would have been delighted to oblige. But to lift material, without my approval, is theft.

Almost as soon as I'd sent the letter, though, I began to have second thoughts. The truth was that, although I said I'd been robbed, I didn't feel that way. Nor did I feel particularly angry. One of the first things I had said to a friend after hearing about the echoes of my article in "Frozen" was that this was the only way I was ever going to get to Broadway—and I was only half joking. On some level, I considered Lavery's borrowing to be a compliment. A savvier writer would have changed all those references to Lewis, and rewritten the quotes from me, so that their origin was no longer recognizable. But how would I have been better off if Lavery had disguised the source of her inspiration?

Dorothy Lewis, for her part, was understandably upset. She was considering a lawsuit. And, to increase her odds of success, she asked me to assign her the copyright to my article. I agreed, but then I changed my mind. Lewis had told me that she "wanted her life back." Yet in order to get her life back, it appeared, she first had to acquire it from me. That seemed a little strange.

Then I got a copy of the script for "Frozen." I found it breathtaking. I realize that this isn't supposed to be a relevant consideration. And yet it was: instead of feeling that my words had been taken from me, I felt that they had become part of some grander cause. In late September, the story broke. The *Times*, the *Observer* in England, and the Associated Press all ran stories about Lavery's alleged plagiarism, and the articles were picked up by newspapers around the world. Bryony Lavery had seen one of my articles, responded to what she read, and used it as she constructed a work of art. And now her reputation was in tatters. Something about that didn't seem right.

In 1992, the Beastie Boys released a song called "Pass the Mic," which begins with a six-second sample taken from the 1976 composition "Choir," by the jazz flutist James Newton. The sample was an exercise in what is called multiphonics, where the flutist "overblows" into the instrument while simultaneously singing in a falsetto. In the case of "Choir," Newton played a C on the flute, then sang C, D-flat, C—and the distortion of the overblown C, combined with his vocalizing, created a surprisingly complex and haunting sound. In "Pass the Mic," the Beastie Boys repeated the Newton sample more than forty times. The effect was riveting.

In the world of music, copyrighted works fall into two categories—the recorded performance and the composition underlying that performance. If you write a rap song, and want to sample the chorus from Billy Joel's "Piano Man," you first have to get permission from the record label to use the "Piano Man" recording, and then get permission from Billy Joel (or whoever owns his music) to use the underlying composition. In the case of "Pass the Mic," the Beastie Boys got the first kind of permission—the rights to use the recording of "Choir"—but not the second. Newton sued, and he lost—and the reason he lost serves as a useful introduction to how to think about intellectual property.

At issue in the case wasn't the distinctiveness of Newton's performance. The Beastie Boys, everyone agreed, had properly licensed Newton's performance when they paid the copyright recording fee. And there was no question about whether they had copied the underlying music to the sample. At issue was simply whether the Beastie Boys were required to ask for that secondary permission: was the composition underneath those six seconds so distinctive and original that Newton could be said to own it? The court said that it wasn't.

The chief expert witness for the Beastie Boys in the "Choir" case was Lawrence Ferrara, who is a professor of music at New York University, and when I asked him to explain the court's ruling he walked over to the piano in the corner of his office and played those three notes: C, D-flat, C. "That's it!" he shouted. "There ain't nothing else! That's what was used. You know what this is? It's no more than a mordent, a turn. It's been done thousands upon thousands of times. No one can say they own that."

Ferrara then played the most famous four-note sequence in classical music, the opening of Beethoven's Fifth: G, G, G, E-flat. This was unmistakably Beethoven. But was it original? "That's a harder case," Ferrara said. "Actually, though, other composers wrote that. Beethoven himself wrote that in a piano sonata, and you can find figures like that in composers who predate Beethoven. It's one thing if you're talking about *da-da-da dummm, da-da-da dummm*—those notes, with those durations. But just the four pitches, G, G, G, E-flat? Nobody owns those."

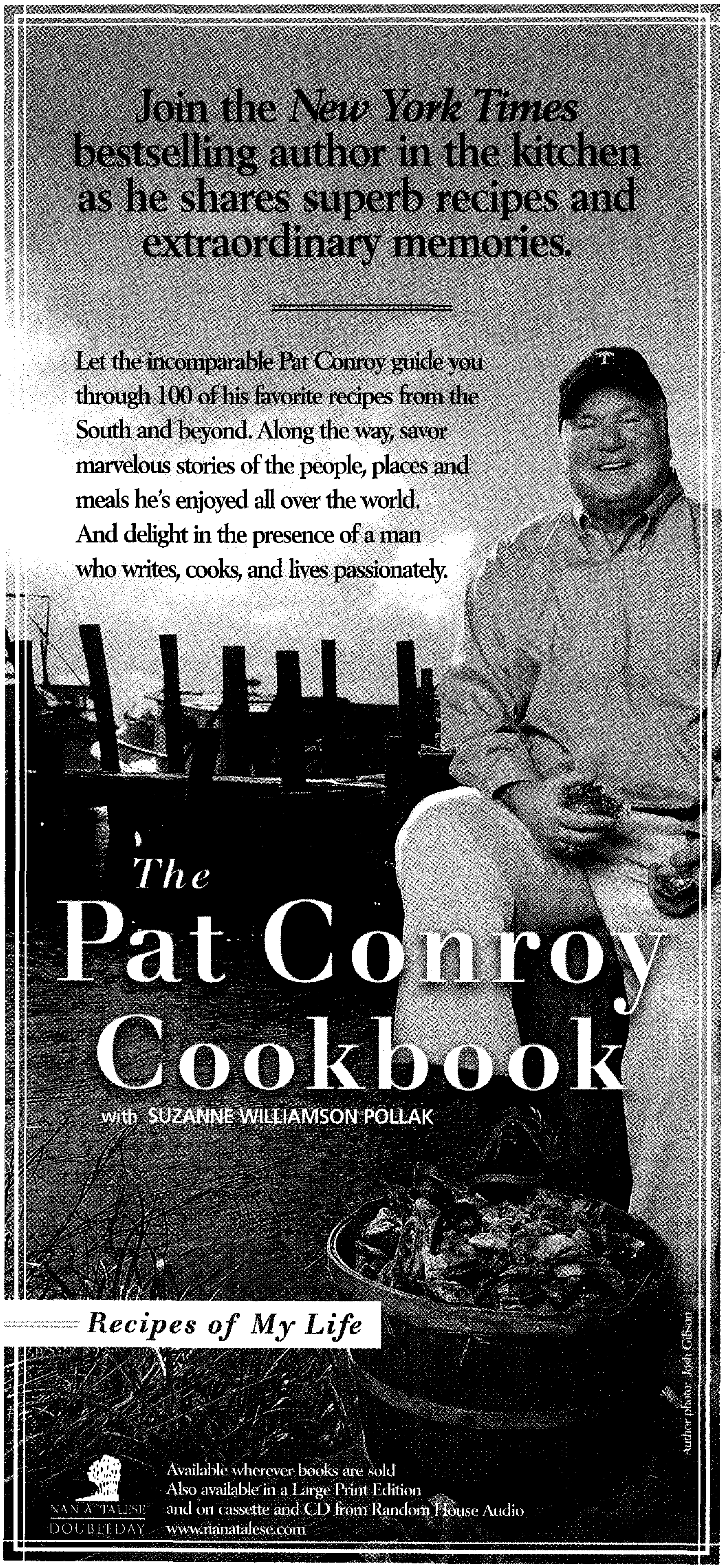
Ferrara once served as an expert witness for Andrew Lloyd Webber, who was being sued by Ray Repp, a composer of Catholic folk music. Repp said that the opening few bars of Lloyd Webber's 1984 "Phantom Song," from "The Phantom of the Opera," bore an overwhelming resemblance to his composition "Till You," written six years earlier, in 1978. As Ferrara told the story, he sat down at the piano again and played the beginning of both songs, one after

"Are you taking anyone for the pain?"

the other; sure enough, they sounded strikingly similar. "Here's Lloyd Webber," he said, calling out each note as he played it. "Here's Repp. Same sequence. The only difference is that Andrew writes a perfect fourth and Repp writes a sixth."

But Ferrara wasn't quite finished. "I said, let me have everything Andrew Lloyd Webber wrote prior to 1978—'Jesus Christ Superstar,' 'Joseph,' 'Evita.' " He combed through every score, and in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" he found what he was looking for. "It's the song 'Benjamin Calypso.' " Ferrara started playing it. It was immediately familiar. "It's the first phrase of 'Phantom Song.' It's even using the same notes. But wait—it gets better. Here's 'Close Every Door,' from a 1969 concert performance of 'Joseph.' " Ferrara is a dapper, animated man, with a thin, well-manicured mustache, and thinking about the Lloyd Webber case was almost enough to make him jump up and down. He began to play again. It was the second phrase of "Phantom." "The first half of 'Phantom' is in 'Benjamin Calypso.' The second half is in 'Close Every Door.' They are identical. On the button. In the case of the first theme, in fact, 'Benjamin Calypso' is closer to the first half of the theme at issue than the plaintiff's song. Lloyd Webber writes something in 1984, and he borrows from himself."

In the "Choir" case, the Beastie Boys' copying didn't amount to theft because it was too trivial. In the "Phantom" case, what Lloyd Webber was alleged to have copied didn't amount to theft because the material in question wasn't original to his accuser. Under copyright law, what matters is not that you copied someone else's work. What matters is *what* you copied, and *how much* you copied. Intellectual-property doctrine isn't a straightforward application of the ethical principle "Thou shalt not steal." At its core is the notion that there are certain situations where you *can* steal. The protections of copyright, for instance, are time-limited; once something passes into the public domain, anyone can copy it without restriction. Or suppose that you invented a cure for breast cancer in your basement lab. Any patent you received would protect your intellectual property for twenty years, but after that anyone could take



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your invention. You get an initial monopoly on your creation because we want to provide economic incentives for people to invent things like cancer drugs. But everyone gets to steal your breast-cancer cure—after a decent interval—because it is also in society's interest to let as many people as possible copy your invention; only then can others learn from it, and build on it, and come up with better and cheaper alternatives. This balance between the protecting and the limiting of intellectual property is, in fact, enshrined in the Constitution: "Congress shall have the power to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited"—note that specification, *limited*—"Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries."

So is it true that words belong to the person who wrote them, just as other kinds of property belong to their owners? Actually, no. As the Stanford law professor Lawrence Lessig argues in his new book "Free Culture":

> In ordinary language, to call a copyright a "property" right is a bit misleading, for the property of copyright is an odd kind of property. . . . I understand what I am taking when I take the picnic table you put in your backyard. I am taking a thing, the picnic table, and after I take it, you don't have it. But what am I taking when I take the good idea you had to put a picnic table in the backyard—by, for example, going to Sears, buying a table, and putting it in my backyard? What is the thing that I am taking then?
>
> The point is not just about the thingness of picnic tables versus ideas, though that is an important difference. The point instead is that in the ordinary case—indeed, in practically every case except for a narrow range of exceptions—ideas released to the world are free. I don't take anything from you when I copy the way you dress—though I might seem weird if I do it every day. . . . Instead, as Thomas Jefferson said (and this is especially true when I copy the way someone dresses), "He who receives an idea from me, receives instruction himself without lessening mine; as he who lights his taper at mine, receives light without darkening me."

Lessig argues that, when it comes to drawing this line between private interests and public interests in intellectual property, the courts and Congress have, in recent years, swung much too far in the direction of private interests. He writes, for instance, about the fight by some developing countries to get access to inexpensive versions of Western drugs through what is called "parallel importation"—buying drugs from another developing country that has been licensed to produce patented medicines. The move would save countless lives. But it has been opposed by the United States not on the ground that it would cut into the profits of Western pharmaceutical companies (they don't sell that many patented drugs in developing countries anyway) but on the ground that it violates the sanctity of intellectual property. "We as a culture have lost this sense of balance," Lessig writes. "A certain property fundamentalism, having no connection to our tradition, now reigns in this culture."

Even what Lessig decries as intellectual-property extremism, however, acknowledges that intellectual property has its limits. The United States didn't say that developing countries could never get access to cheap versions of American drugs. It said only that they would have to wait until the patents on those drugs expired. The arguments that Lessig has with the hard-core proponents of intellectual property are almost all arguments about *where* and *when* the line should be drawn between the right to copy and the right to protection from copying, not *whether* a line should be drawn.

But plagiarism is different, and that's what's so strange about it. The ethical rules that govern when it's acceptable for one writer to copy another are even more extreme than the most extreme position of the intellectual-property crowd: when it comes to literature, we have somehow decided that copying is *never* acceptable. Not long ago, the Harvard law professor Laurence Tribe was accused of lifting material from the historian Henry Abraham for his 1985 book, "God Save This Honorable Court." What did the charge amount to? In an exposé that appeared in the conservative publication *The Weekly Standard*, Joseph Bottum produced a number of examples of close paraphrasing, but his smoking gun was this one borrowed sentence: "Taft publicly pronounced Pitney to be a 'weak member' of the Court to whom he could not assign cases." That's it. Nineteen words.

Not long after I learned about "Frozen," I went to see a friend of mine who works in the music industry. We sat in his living room on the Upper East Side, facing each other in easy chairs, as he worked his way through a mountain of CDs. He played "Angel," by the reggae singer Shaggy, and then "The Joker," by the Steve Miller Band, and told me to listen very carefully to the similarity in bass lines. He played Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" and then Muddy Waters's "You Need Love," to show the extent to which Led Zeppelin had mined the blues for inspiration. He played "Twice My Age," by Shabba Ranks and Krystal, and then the saccharine seventies pop standard "Seasons in the Sun," until I could hear the echoes of the second song in the first. He played "Last Christmas," by Wham!, followed by Barry Manilow's "Can't Smile Without You" to explain why Manilow might have been startled when he first heard that song, and then "Joanna," by Kool and the Gang, because, in a different way, "Last Christmas" was an homage to Kool and the Gang as well. "That sound you hear in Nirvana," my friend said at one point, "that soft and then loud, kind of exploding thing, a lot of that was inspired by the Pixies. Yet Kurt Cobain"—Nirvana's lead singer and songwriter—"was such a genius that he managed to make it his own. And 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'?"—here he was referring to perhaps the best-known Nirvana song. "That's Boston's 'More Than a Feeling.' " He began to hum the riff of the Boston hit, and said, "The first time I heard 'Teen Spirit,' I said, 'That guitar lick is from "More Than a Feeling." ' But it was different—it was urgent and brilliant and new."

He played another CD. It was Rod Stewart's "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy," a huge hit from the nineteen-seventies. The chorus has a distinctive, catchy hook—the kind of tune that millions of Americans probably hummed in the shower the year it came out. Then he put on "Taj Mahal," by the Brazilian artist Jorge Ben Jor, which was recorded several years before the Rod Stewart song. In his twenties, my friend was a d.j. at various downtown clubs, and at some point he'd become interested in world music. "I caught it back then," he said. A small, sly smile spread across his face. The opening bars of "Taj Mahal" were very South American, a world away from what we had just listened to. And then I heard it. It was so obvious and unambiguous that I laughed out loud; virtually note for note, it was the hook from "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy." It was possible that Rod Stewart had independently come up with that riff, because resemblance is not proof of influence. It was also possible that he'd been in Brazil, listened to some local music, and liked what he heard.

My friend had hundreds of these examples. We could have sat in his living room playing at musical genealogy for hours. Did the examples upset him? Of course not, because he knew enough about music to know that these patterns of influence—cribbing, tweaking, transforming—were at the very heart of the creative process. True, copying could go too far. There were times when one artist was simply replicating the work of another, and to let that pass inhibited true creativity. But it was equally dangerous to be overly vigilant in policing creative expression, because if Led Zeppelin hadn't been free to mine the blues for inspiration we wouldn't have got "Whole Lotta Love," and if Kurt Cobain couldn't listen to "More Than a Feeling" and pick out and transform the part he really liked we wouldn't have "Smells Like Teen Spirit"—and, in the evolution of rock, "Smells Like Teen Spirit" was a real step forward from "More Than a Feeling." A successful music executive has to understand the distinction between borrowing that is transformative and borrowing that is merely derivative, and that distinction, I realized, was what was missing from the discussion of Bryony Lavery's borrowings. Yes, she had copied my work. But no one was asking why she had copied it, or what she had copied, or whether her copying served some larger purpose.

Bryony Lavery came to see me in early October. It was a beautiful Saturday afternoon, and we met at my apartment. She is in her fifties, with short tousled blond hair and pale-blue eyes, and was wearing jeans and a loose green shirt and clogs. There was something rugged and raw about her. In the *Times* the previous day, the theatre critic Ben Brantley had not been kind to her new play, "Last Easter." This was supposed to be her moment of triumph. "Frozen" had been nominated for a Tony. "Last Easter" had opened Off Broadway. And now? She sat down heavily at my kitchen table. "I've had the absolute gamut of emotions," she said, playing nervously with her hands as she spoke, as if she needed a cigarette. "I think when one's working, one works between absolute confidence and absolute doubt, and I got a huge dollop of each. I was terribly confident that I could write well after 'Frozen,' and then this opened a chasm of doubt." She looked up at me. "I'm terribly sorry," she said.

Lavery began to explain: "What happens when I write is that I find that I'm somehow zoning on a number of things. I find that I've cut things out of newspapers because the story or something in them is interesting to me, and seems to me to have a place onstage. Then it starts coagulating. It's like the soup starts thicken-

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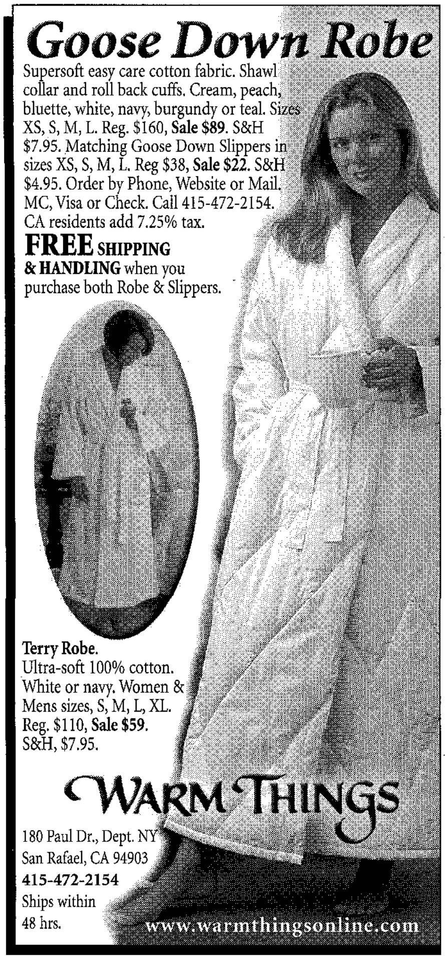

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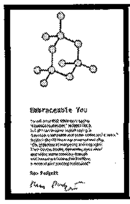

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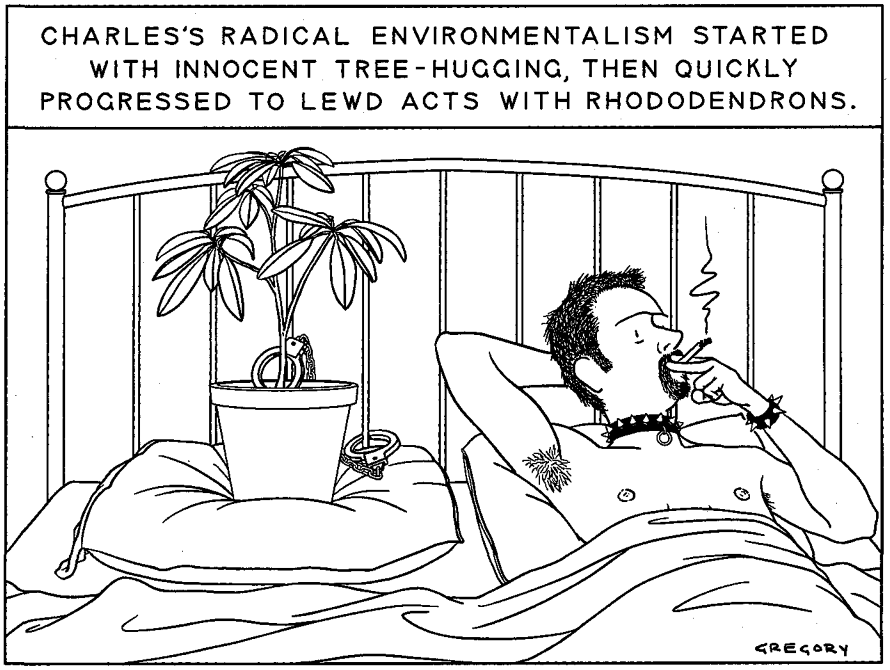


CHARLES'S RADICAL ENVIRONMENTALISM STARTED WITH INNOCENT TREE-HUGGING, THEN QUICKLY PROGRESSED TO LEWD ACTS WITH RHODODENDRONS.

• •

ing. And then a story, which is also a structure, starts emerging. I'd been reading thrillers like 'The Silence of the Lambs,' about fiendishly clever serial killers. I'd also seen a documentary of the victims of the Yorkshire killers, Myra Hindley and Ian Brady, who were called the Moors Murderers. They spirited away several children. It seemed to me that killing somehow wasn't fiendishly clever. It was the opposite of clever. It was as banal and stupid and destructive as it could be. There are these interviews with the survivors, and what struck me was that they appeared to be frozen in time. And one of them said, 'If that man was out now, I'm a forgiving man but I couldn't forgive him. I'd kill him.' That's in 'Frozen.' I was thinking about that. Then my mother went into hospital for a very simple operation, and the surgeon punctured her womb, and therefore her intestine, and she got peritonitis and died."

When Lavery started talking about her mother, she stopped, and had to collect herself. "She was seventy-four, and what occurred to me is that I utterly forgave him. I thought it was an honest mistake. I'm very sorry it happened to my mother, but it's an honest mistake." Lavery's feelings confused her, though, because she could think of people in her own life whom she had held grudges against for years, for the most trivial of reasons. "In a lot of ways, 'Frozen' was an attempt to understand the nature of forgiveness," she said.

Lavery settled, in the end, on a play with three characters. The first is a serial killer named Ralph, who kidnaps and murders a young girl. The second is the murdered girl's mother, Nancy. The third is a psychiatrist from New York, Agnetha, who goes to England to examine Ralph. In the course of the play, the three lives slowly intersect—and the characters gradually change and become "unfrozen" as they come to terms with the idea of forgiveness. For the character of Ralph, Lavery says that she drew on a book about a serial killer titled "The Murder of Childhood," by Ray Wyre and Tim Tate. For the character of Nancy, she drew on an article written in the *Guardian* by a woman named Marian Partington, whose sister had been murdered by the serial killers Frederick and Rosemary West. And, for the character of Agnetha, Lavery drew on a reprint of my article that she had read in a British publication. "I wanted a scientist who would understand," Lavery said—a scientist who could explain how it was possible to forgive a man who had killed your daughter, who could explain that a serial killing was not a crime of evil but a crime of illness. "I wanted it to be *accurate*," she added.

So why didn't she credit me and Lewis? How could she have been so meticulous about accuracy but not about attribution? Lavery didn't have an answer. "I thought it was O.K. to use it," she said with an embarrassed shrug. "It never occurred to me to ask you. I thought it was *news*."

She was aware of how hopelessly inadequate that sounded, and when she went on to say that my article had been in a big folder of source material that she had used in the writing of the play, and that the folder had got lost during the play's initial run, in Birmingham, she was aware of how inadequate that sounded, too.

But then Lavery began to talk about Marian Partington, her other important inspiration, and her story became more complicated. While she was writing "Frozen," Lavery said, she wrote to Partington to inform her of how much she was relying on Partington's experiences. And when "Frozen" opened in London she and Partington met and talked. In reading through articles on Lavery in the British press, I found this, from the *Guardian* two years ago, long before the accusations of plagiarism surfaced:

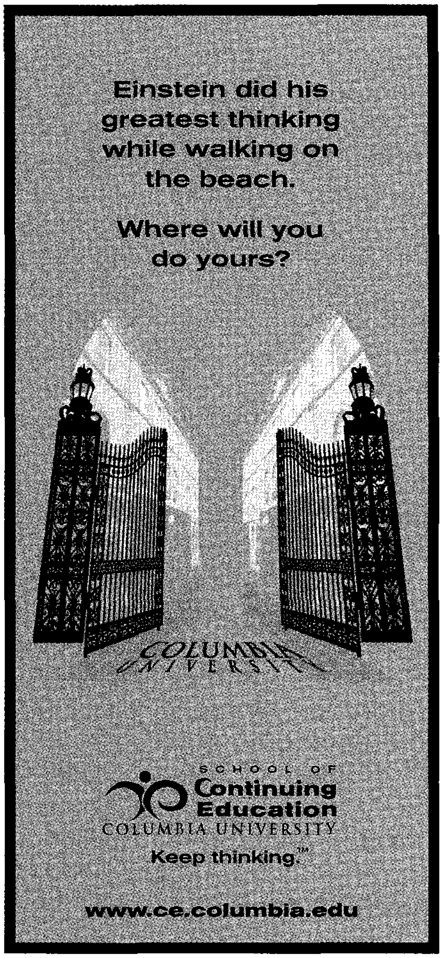
> Lavery is aware of the debt she owes to Partington's writing and is eager to acknowledge it.
>
> "I always mention it, because I am aware of the enormous debt that I owe to the generosity of Marian Partington's piece. . . . You have to be hugely careful when writing something like this, because it touches on people's shattered lives and you wouldn't want them to come across it unawares."

Lavery wasn't indifferent to other people's intellectual property, then; she was just indifferent to my intellectual property. That's because, in her eyes, what she took from me was different. It was, as she put it, "news." She copied my description of Dorothy Lewis's collaborator, Jonathan Pincus, conducting a neurological examination. She copied the description of the disruptive neurological effects of prolonged periods of high stress. She copied my transcription of the television interview with Franklin. She reproduced a quote that I had taken from a study of abused children, and she copied a quotation from Lewis on the nature of evil. She didn't copy my musings, or conclusions, or structure. She lifted sentences like "It is the function of the cortex—and, in particular, those parts of the cortex beneath the forehead, known as the frontal lobes—to modify the impulses that surge up from within the brain, to provide judgment, to organize behavior and decision-making, to learn and adhere to rules of everyday life." It is difficult to have pride of authorship in a sentence like that. My guess is that it's a reworked version of something I read in a textbook. Lavery knew that failing to credit Partington would have been wrong. Borrowing the personal story of a woman whose sister was murdered by a serial killer matters because that story has real emotional value to its owner. As Lavery put it, it touches on someone's shattered life. Are boilerplate descriptions of physiological functions in the same league?

It also matters *how* Lavery chose to use my words. Borrowing crosses the line when it is used for a derivative work. It's one thing if you're writing a history of the Kennedys, like Doris Kearns Goodwin, and borrow, without attribution, from another history of the Kennedys. But Lavery wasn't writing another profile of Dorothy Lewis. She was writing a play about something entirely new—about what would happen if a mother met the man who killed her daughter. And she used my descriptions of Lewis's work and the outline of Lewis's life as a building block in making that confrontation plausible. Isn't that the way creativity is supposed to work? Old words in the service of a new idea aren't the problem. What inhibits creativity is new words in the service of an old idea.

And this is the second problem with plagiarism. It is not merely extremist. It has also become disconnected from the broader question of what does and does not inhibit creativity. We accept the right of one writer to engage in a full-scale knockoff of another—think how many serial-killer novels have been cloned from "The Silence of the Lambs." Yet, when Kathy Acker incorporated parts of a Harold Robbins sex scene verbatim in a satiric novel, she was denounced as a plagiarist (and threatened with a lawsuit). When I worked at a newspaper, we were routinely dispatched to "match" a story from the *Times:* to do a new version of someone else's idea. But had we "matched" any of the *Times'* words—even the most banal of phrases—it could have been a firing offense. The ethics of plagiarism have turned into the narcissism of small differences: because journalism cannot own up to its heavily derivative nature, it must enforce originality on the level of the sentence.

Dorothy Lewis says that one of the



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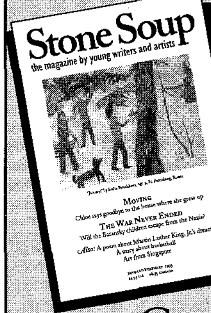

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things that hurt her most about "Frozen" was that Agnetha turns out to have had an affair with her collaborator, David Nabkus. Lewis feared that people would think she had had an affair with her collaborator, Jonathan Pincus. "That's slander," Lewis told me. "I'm recognizable in that. Enough people have called me and said, 'Dorothy, it's about you,' and if everything up to that point is true, then the affair becomes true in the mind. So that is another reason that I feel violated. If you are going to take the life of somebody, and make them absolutely identifiable, you don't create an affair, and you certainly don't have that as a climax of the play."

It is easy to understand how shocking it must have been for Lewis to sit in the audience and see her "character" admit to that indiscretion. But the truth is that Lavery has every right to create an affair for Agnetha, because Agnetha is not Dorothy Lewis. She is a fictional character, drawn from Lewis's life but endowed with a completely imaginary set of circumstances and actions. In real life, Lewis kissed Ted Bundy on the cheek, and in some versions of "Frozen" Agnetha kisses Ralph. But Lewis kissed Bundy only because he kissed her first, and there's a big difference between responding to a kiss from a killer and initiating one. When we first see Agnetha, she's rushing out of the house and thinking murderous thoughts on the airplane. Dorothy Lewis also charges out of her house and thinks murderous thoughts. But the dramatic function of that scene is to make us think, in that moment, that Agnetha is crazy. And the one inescapable fact about Lewis is that she is not crazy: she has helped get people to rethink their notions of criminality because of her unshakable command of herself and her work. Lewis is upset not just about how Lavery copied her life story, in other words, but about how Lavery *changed* her life story. She's not merely upset about plagiarism. She's upset about art—about the use of old words in the service of a new idea—and her feelings are perfectly understandable, because the alterations of art can be every bit as unsettling and hurtful as the thievery of plagiarism. It's just that art is not a breach of ethics.

When I read the original reviews of "Frozen," I noticed that time and again critics would use, without attribution, some version of the sentence "The difference between a crime of evil and a crime of illness is the difference between a sin and a symptom." That's my phrase, of course. I wrote it. Lavery borrowed it from me, and now the critics were borrowing it from her. The plagiarist was being plagiarized. In this case, there is no "art" defense: nothing new was being done with that line. And this was not "news." Yet do I really own "sins and symptoms"? There is a quote by Gandhi, it turns out, using the same two words, and I'm sure that if I were to plow through the body of English literature I would find the path littered with crimes of evil and crimes of illness. The central fact about the "Phantom" case is that Ray Repp, if he was borrowing from Andrew Lloyd Webber, certainly didn't realize it, and Andrew Lloyd Webber didn't realize that he was borrowing from himself. Creative property, Lessig reminds us, has many lives—the newspaper arrives at our door, it becomes part of the archive of human knowledge, then it wraps fish. And, by the time ideas pass into their third and fourth lives, we lose track of where they came from, and we lose control of where they are going. The final dishonesty of the plagiarism fundamentalists is to encourage us to pretend that these chains of influence and evolution do not exist, and that a writer's words have a virgin birth and an eternal life. I suppose that I could get upset about what happened to my words. I could also simply acknowledge that I had a good, long ride with that line—and let it go.

"It's been absolutely bloody, really, because it attacks my own notion of my character," Lavery said, sitting at my kitchen table. A bouquet of flowers she had brought were on the counter behind her. "It feels absolutely terrible. I've had to go through the pain for being careless. I'd like to repair what happened, and I don't know how to do that. I just didn't think I was doing the wrong thing . . . and then the article comes out in the New York *Times* and every continent in the world." There was a long silence. She was heartbroken. But, more than that, she was confused, because she didn't understand how six hundred and seventy-five rather ordinary words could bring the walls tumbling down. "It's been horrible and bloody." She began to cry. "I'm still composting what happened. It will be for a purpose . . . whatever that purpose is." ◆

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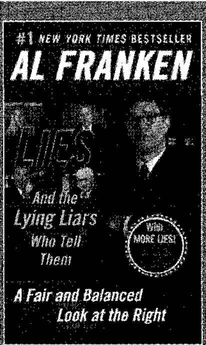
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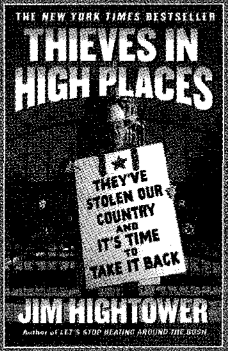
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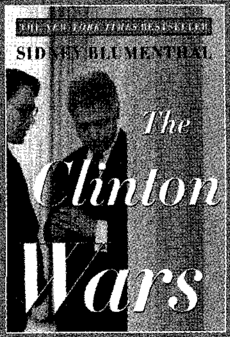

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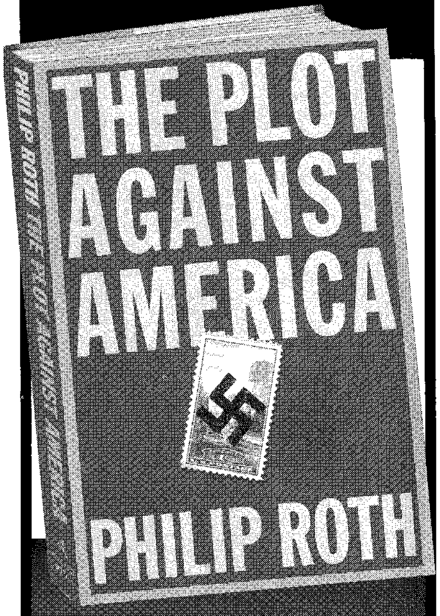

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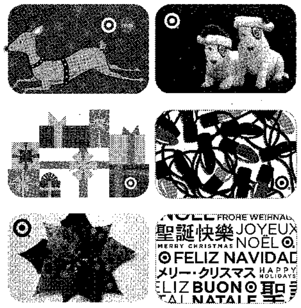

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THE SPORTING SCENE

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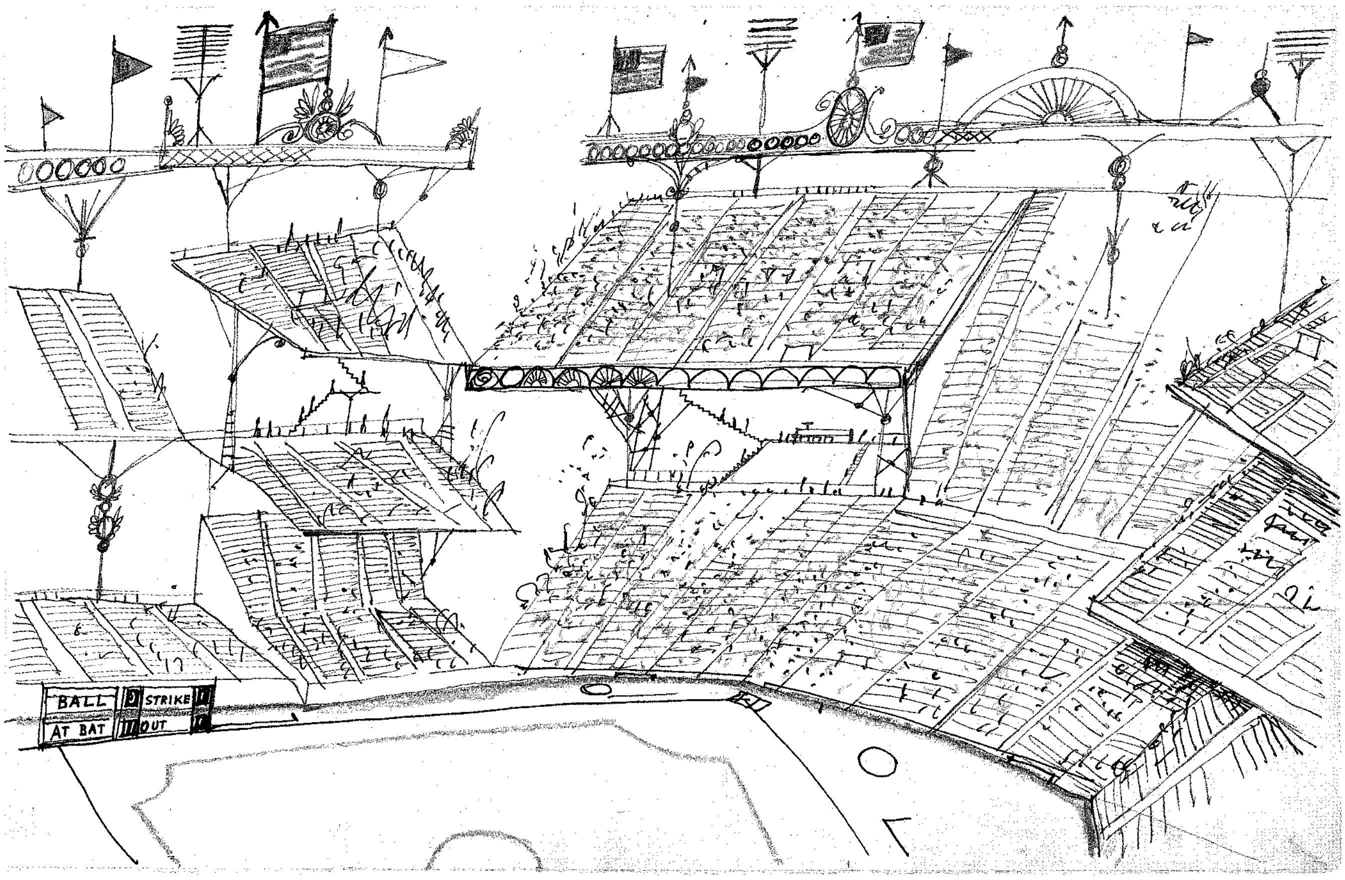
The games almost finished off their fans, but at last, wow, the Sox have won.

BY ROGER ANGELL

It wasn't all pretty. Yes, it's Sox triumphant—the Sox won; the Red Sox are World Champions; it happened, it's over—so why remind ourselves that this year's World Series, a four-game Boston sweep over the St. Louis Cardinals, was a certified clunker, the flattest classic in memory? Much of its action was compressed into the first game, a prolonged 11–9 embarrassment at Fenway Park that ran four hours but felt like six, with its eleven pitchers, fourteen walks, and five errors—four by the winning Sox, who blew a five-run lead and then a two-run lead along the way. "That was not an instructional video," said Sox manager Terry Francona when it was done. The game's prime moment wasn't the decisive and popular eighth-inning, two-run homer by Mark Bellhorn, which ticked off the friendly Fenway right-field foul pole, but a sensational play by Boston's Manny Ramirez in the top of that same stanza. The sensation was helpless laughter, when Manny, belatedly rushing in from left field for a sliding catch of Larry Walker's low liner, caught his spikes instead and was flipped half-upright again, hands out and suddenly—*yow!*—face to face with the ball, which miraculously caromed off his shoulder instead of his noggin and continued along into left, as the tying Cardinal run came home. Replays don't show Ramirez's face as he hurried off after the ball, but I bet he is laughing, too. Defense and self-consciousness are not a problem for Manny, who posted forty-three home runs and a hundred and thirty runs batted in this season, enjoying himself as never before, and he was probably not much surprised when, despite the comedy, he was voted Most Valuable Player for the Series after its quick conclusion. Because the Sox won, Manny's goof will barely register in Sox fans' winter memories, when compared with their images of him rubbing headmops with Pedro Martinez in the dugout, or once again sloping up to the plate and loosening his voluminous uniform, so loose himself that there's plenty of time—more time than other batters are given—to look at the incoming pitch and think it over and, well, O.K., why not, give it a rip.

The Red Sox managed four errors the next night as well, but were never threatened in the course of a 4–2 win, behind their patched-together ace Curt Schilling, and the Cardinals, with a famous offensive lineup, brought home but one lone run in the third game and none at all in the last. Albert Pujols, the Cards' next Hall of Famer, made some dandy plays in the Series and hit a little, but to small avail, and the family-crowd scarlet-garbed home Cardinal rooters fell into museumlike silences. Derek Lowe, a towering, down-on-his-luck Red Sox veteran, had lost his starter's slot late in the year, from ineffectuality, but, reluctantly called upon in the post-season after attrition had worn out the other Boston arms, he magically rediscovered his sinker, here throwing seven innings of three-hit, shutout ball and coming home with the win. Lowe had also terminated the Yankees with one hit in six innings in that prior finale, on two days' rest. An upcoming free agent this year, he is emotional and realistic in equal parts, and beneath the beard and clenched concentration on his long face you could see the excitement struggling to break free as the outs and innings rolled by. "Games like this can make or break your so-called career," he had said, and with these two outings alone he is believed to have improved his value on the market by eight or ten million dollars.

The Redbird collapse can probably be laid to weak pitching, unless you decide that the baseball gods, a little surfeited by the cruel jokes and disappointments they have inflicted on the Boston team and its followers down the years, and perhaps as sick of the Curse of the Bambino as the rest of us, decided to try a little tenderness. This notion came to me in the sixth game of the scarifying American League Championship, when Gary Sheffield, swinging violently against Schilling with a teammate at first, topped a little nubber that rolled gently toward Sox third baseman Bill Mueller, then unexpectedly bumped into the bag and hopped up over his glove: base hit. Nothing ensued, as Schilling quickly dismissed the next three Yankee hitters, but the tiny bank shot, which is not all that rare in the sport, was the sort of wrinkle that once could have invited a larger, grossly unfair complication and perhaps even a new vitrine next to Buckner's muff or Boone's shot in the ghastly Sox gallery. You could almost envision the grin upstairs. Instead, looking back at the action up till now—the Yankees' daunting three-game lead after the first three meetings of this championship elimination; their nineteen runs in the Game Three blowout; and then the Sox' two comeback wins achieved across the next two games or twenty-six innings or ten hours and fifty-one minutes of consuming, astounding baseball—the old god feels an unfamiliar coal of pity within. "Ah, well," he murmurs, turning away. "Let it go."



SAUL STEINBERG, "UNTITLED" (1955-58) © THE SAUL STEINBERG FOUNDATION

Because they lost, the Yankees' hundred and one wins this season (second only to the Cardinals' hundred and five) barely count, here at the end. This Torre team, transformed by the departure of Roger Clemens and Andy Pettitte and the arrival of expensive superstars like Alex Rodriguez, Gary Sheffield, and the fragile and palely hostile Kevin Brown, struggled glumly in the early weeks, perhaps distracted by its opening visiting-celebrity series against the Devil Rays, which was played in Japan. The Yankees settled into first place in their division on June 1st and were not dislodged thereafter—more of a feat than it appears, given the miseries of Jason Giambi, pathetically diminished by an intestinal parasite and then a tumor of the pituitary gland. None of the starting pitchers stayed consistent or free of the disabled list, but the rotation was lifted by the bullpen duo of Paul Quantrill and Tom Gordon, coming on almost daily before Mariano Rivera. Kept in games they'd looked to lose, the Yanks won late and often, but it was the day-to-day from Hideki Matsui and the imperturbably brilliant Derek Jeter (who shrugged off an early 0-for-32 streak at the plate) and the wrinkly-browed super-pro Gary Sheffield that made up for their deficiencies. A-Rod, acquired late in the off-season after an earlier trade had seemed set to land him in Boston (the Players Association nixed the deal, which would have allowed him to accept a substantially reduced salary), struggled a bit at the plate but not at third base, a new position to him, taken on because of Jeter's tenancy at short. The team ran into strange blips and swerves along the way—a three-game sweep by the Mets in July, a rocky 1–7 patch in August, and a 22–0 pounding, the worst defeat in Yankee history, by the Indians a few days later. When Kevin Brown came off the field after a losing September effort against the Orioles and smashed his left fist (it was not his pitching hand) into a wall, breaking some bones and sidelining himself for the most serious part of the season, it confirmed something rich and dark about the fame-burdened old champions in the minds of their insatiable haters.

It was quite the other way at the overpacked Fenway Park, where grunge

"My family likes to set up our grudges at Thanksgiving, stew over them through December, then take our revenge at Christmas."

and base hits and a thousand team hugups became something like a perpetual kiddies' picnic as the eventful summer wore along. Headbands and team hair proliferated, batting helmets tarred over, and "The Idiots" replaced last year's "Cowboy Up!" Johnny Damon's Sea of Galilee hairline reached his shoulders and below—"WWJDD?" began popping up on the Soxblogs—while Kevin Millar opted for a blond semi-buzz cut to go with his black Abe Lincoln whiskers, and Bronson Arroyo came out in yellow cornrows, with fetching tassels at the nape. On his off days, Pedro Martinez settled capless into his upper corner of the dugout, wearing only remainder bits of the Boston uniform, and delivered momlike nods and smiles toward the unbuttoned Manny as he ambled toward the bat rack again. No one could say how much of this boyish narcissism was just countermatter to the dadly Yankee hauteur, or how much it had to do with the Sox' bounce and verve when the games began. Why even ask?

This was the most confident lineup of hitters and count-workers we'd seen in years, a bunch at ease with strike two or a late-inning deficit. Their rackety three hundred and seventy-three doubles was an offensive high-water mark famously reached by the Cardinals in 1930. Their talent would show itself unexpectedly in games, and sometimes almost give you a glimpse of what hitting is all about. In the fourth inning of Game Six of the Yankee playoff, the switch-hitting catcher Jason Varitek stood in against a tough-minded Yankee right-hander, Jon Lieber, and quickly fell behind on two called strikes. There were two outs, with a Boston base runner, Kevin Millar, on second. The next pitch, a ball, got away, moving Millar along to third, but seven more pitches were required—four of them fouls and the last one barely ticked—before Varitek singled cleanly to center for the first run of the game. Orlando Cabrera also singled, and the next batter, Mark Bellhorn, hit a three-run homer to left—the big blow of the game, of course, but it was Lieber's discouragement and hurt feelings about all those pitches he'd had to think about and then deliver to Varitek, all of them after two strikes and two outs, that made it happen. When Johnny Damon came up to bat in the second inning of the final Yankee game, the Sox were already ahead by 2–0 and had the bases loaded. The new pitcher just now summoned in for the crisis was a starter, Javier Vazquez, and it must have entered Damon's mind that, unaccustomed to the current clutter, he would almost surely opt for a first-pitch fastball and strike one. Damon swung and hit it into the right-field stands for a grand slam.

In the middle of the Sox order this year came the large and optimistic d.h., David Ortiz, forever smacking his gloves together and stepping back into the box, where he presented a pitcher with miserable options. Ortiz swings left, and anything low and in to him tends to be blistered distantly to right—some of his pulled shots got into the stands or caromed off a barrier in right before he was three steps up the line—while up and away produced high drives to left, good for outs in many parks but in Fenway a rain of doubles off the wall. His year-end batting line confirms the pattern: third in the league in doubles; second in runs batted in and tied for second in homers (with his teammate Ramirez just ahead); and first with ninety-one extra-base hits.

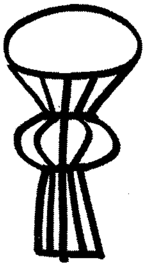
Watching the unkempt Red Sox brought back to me a different frazzled and talented bunch, the 1982 Milwaukee Brewers, who lost a seven-game World Series to the Cardinals that year. Three veteran swingers in their lineup—Ben Ogilvie, Cecil Cooper, and Gorman Thomas—combined for a hundred and five homers that season, while two others, Paul Molitor and Robin Yount, were heading for the Hall of Fame. Grunge and three-day beards were a specialty with the frowzy Thomas, who wore the same pair of lucky stockings in every game of the year, and Pete Vuckovich, a hulking right-handed starter who later played the heavy in the movie "Major League." Despite resemblances, the style gap (and the income gap) between the two teams is hard to grasp. These Brewers were working guys, grizzled clubhouse rats who lingered over their card games, and later helped out behind the bar at Cesar's Inn, a nearby factory-clientele bar owned by manager Harvey Kuenn and his wife, Audrey. It would never have occurred to Harvey's Wallbangers (as they were known) to goof around like adolescents in the clubhouse or the dugout; they were grown men, and private. Were they better hitters than the 2004 Red Sox? Maybe not.

Iconic players—the Kid and Johnny Pesky, Yaz, Jim Rice, and Nomar—have allowed the Red Sox to overlook some chronic problems, like speed and defense, down the years, but on July 31st, minutes before the trading deadline, and with the Sox in second in their division, eight and a half games behind the Yankees, the young general manager, Theo Epstein, completed a multi-club trade that sent away the once untouchable shortstop Nomar Garciaparra to the Cubs, in return for the younger and quicker Orlando Cabrera, from the Expos; a Gold Glove first baseman, Doug Mientkiewicz, from the Twins; and a late-inning base-stealer, Dave Roberts, from the Dodgers. The shocker here was Garciaparra, who had been too easily injured of late, and had become a distant celebrity in the clubhouse (there was a red line on the floor, a figurative little looped maître-d' rope, in front of his locker, to discourage writers). Talk was that he'd been affronted by the news that the Sox planned to trade him away over the winter, as part of the aborted A-Rod deal, but I prefer to think that it was a damaged wrist, first injured in 1999, that took away his exuberant line-drive-spraying swings at the plate, and dimmed the gleam in his eyes. "Nomah!" no more.

The trade took a while to work itself out—Cabrera, after an opening home run, went three for twenty-four at the plate, while Epstein confessed that he'd been lying low, to avoid the fans—but then the Sox ran off six straight wins, then ten straight, and twenty of twenty-two along the way, and looked ahead to the hard games and melodramas just up the line. With two seasons gone since Epstein's appointment, the club now bore his brand. This year, he also brought in the closer Keith Foulke, from the Athletics, and the famous and expensive Curt Schilling (for two years and twenty-five million dollars; or, with options, three years and forty), who had played a central role in his World Series with the Phillies and the Diamondbacks. Kevin Millar and David Ortiz had been scooped up at bargain rates a year earlier, while in low favor with their prior clubs. The winning Red Sox will be deeply involved in the post-season market, with players like Pedro Martinez, Derek Lowe, Orlando Cabrera, and Jason Varitek launched on the sea of free agency—and other front-office executives, perhaps a little awestruck, will be dealing warily with the young G.M. He turned thirty last December, and one of these days may even lose the prefix.

What remains of the summerlong soap of this year's Sox and Yankees is a few plays and pitches, so relentlessly repeated in replay that they feel like commercials. On July 1st, Derek Jeter, in pursuit of Trot Nixon's pop inside third base, collars the ball at full speed and dives into the Stadium field boxes, with only his disappearing heels to mark the site of the crash. He emerges slowly, bruised and dazed but O.K.: a miracle as well as a catch for the ages. The game stretches on into the thirteenth, when Ramirez knocks a homer, and the Yanks respond in their half with a Ruben Sierra single and a Miguel Cairo double, and a game-ending pinch-hit rap by backup catcher John Flaherty. The Yanks sweep and motor on, up by seven and a half. Baseball's twists and turns can wring you out some days, but this one felt like "The Lord of the Rings."

Up at the Fens on a late July Saturday, Rodriguez is nailed on the shoulder by a pitch from Bronson Arroyo, and turns to say something to Varitek. There are words—you could lip-read them later—and the big catcher shoves his mitt into the famous phiz, touching off the benches and igniting the stands. Memories of famous bygone millings jump to mind. Will this be Carlton Fisk and Thurman Munson all over again, or like the time somebody—was it Graig Nettles?—called Carlton Fisk a douchebag? No, too bad: order comes quickly and play goes on, minus the perps. There are twenty-seven hits—bats, not fists—in the game, which ends 11–10, Boston, after Bill Mueller's two-run, walk-off stunner against Mariano Rivera. Many Sox players and writers later claimed that this was the game that touched off the team's exuberant run through August, but I cling to a murmured line of Joe Torre's on this: "You like to think that the incentive for winning games is winning games." One day, a smart publisher will anthologize "The Aphorisms of Joe," for that space up there next to La Rochefoucauld.



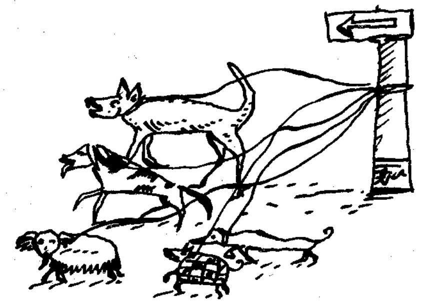
The Sox had drawn within two and a half games of the division-leading Yanks by September 17th but couldn't close the gap. It didn't matter much, since both teams were just about guaranteed a spot in the post-season and would likely find themselves together again in a larger setting. Two late games, five days apart in September, produced fresh humiliations for Pedro Martinez, whose lifetime numbers are 10–10 against the Yankees but 162–56 against the rest of the league. He has looked so frail and hyper-emotional against the Yanks in the last couple of years that we need to remind ourselves of his true status in the annals, with his three Cy Young Awards, a career 2.71 earned-run average, and a thirteen-year record that almost eerily matches the lifetime numbers of the sainted Sandy Koufax. Here once again, though, he coughed up a startling eight runs in five innings to the Yankees, the worst beating of his career, and then, quickly back at Fenway, blew a lead and another game with a couple of late runs, wasting three Red Sox homers. Afterward, as if trying to ward something off, Pedro said, "I just tip my hat and call the Yankees my daddy." The line made great headlines—"SPANKED" in the *Post*—and players on both sides ate it up, of course. "Well, *I'm* his daddy, not the Yankees," Kevin Millar said. "He answers to me first."

October games up north have a different look, darker and more dangerous, with winter always just slipping over the rim of the stands. What impended for the Red Sox Nation after the lads had dropped the first two games of the American League Championships at Yankee Stadium seemed to blow away a summer: Curt Schilling weirdly off-form in the first one—it was the first evidence of his fraying ankle—and flayed with line drives, and then Pedro failing again, by 3–1 this time, and showered with the barbarian tauntings "Who's Your Daddy? Who's Your Dad-dee?" (The happy chant, a gift to the Bronx as rich as an undiscovered Gershwin, will greet visiting Red Sox teams for years after Pedro is gone.) The geared-up Sox fans, pushing past the T-shirt entrepreneurs and impromptu bands and muttering scalpers along the I-90 bridge before Game Three felt punished by the weather and bad thoughts. A pre-game rain was falling—it would wash this one out in the end—and the tromping-along couples and groups and sports guys were talking excitedly about the Red Sox and this big game they'd got tickets for, and gabbling on, too, to keep down their anxieties. Here and there among the family groups and kids in Sox stocking caps and Sox rain capes and Sox sweatshirts you'd see some older types, men with red faces and maybe in parkas. With age guaranteeing their affiliation, they'd passed up the "Go Sox" buttons and the "B" baseball caps, and it occurred to me later on that it wasn't just the more recent Sox successes or failures that had brought them here—the deadly Aaron Boone home run a year ago, or the Evil Empire, or the Curse of the Bambino that the kids kept talking about. A few of them, at least, belonged to a time when winning wasn't quite everything, and they could turn up for a game that was only semi-sold out, in a Fenway Park that didn't have gigantic Coca-Cola bottles up on the light stands and extra rows of seats built on top of the green wall. The Red Sox they'd come and cheer for often didn't have a real shot at a pennant—neither did the Yankees, some years—but your hopes for a sudden great season for them were almost brighter and sharper because of that, and your thoughts about what that could be like hard to keep in check. Whatever these fans' age back then, they were teen-agers in love.

Delayed by a day, this game was the 19–8 disaster at the hands of the Yankees, and the worst Boston drubbing ever suffered in a post-season. It was riveting for the wrong reasons, like Hideki Matsui's thirteen total bases—a single, two doubles, and two homers—and only later, after the Sox had begun their long journey back, could the fans dig through the avalanche site and find tiny hints there of better things ahead. For manager Terry Francona, the main event was Tim Wakefield's offer to pitch amid the wreckage, pitch out of the pen—a sacrificial three and a third innings that cost him his start in the next game but probably saved the Sox pitching for the rest of the distance.

Francona, in his first year at the Boston helm, maintained an elegant balance during his team's extended crisis, never cheerful but without signs of depression or self-pity. The son of a major-leaguer, Tito Francona (he is called Tito, too), he put in ten years in the majors as a first-baseman-outfielder, with no power or distinguishing feats: qualifications that build perfect trust in the clubhouse. Not every skipper could have persuaded Doug Mientkiewicz, who was a day-to-day fixture at first base with the Twins, to become an enthusiastic late-inning defensive replacement, as he did this year. Francona—with front-office concurrence, of course—often played Mark Bellhorn in the second spot in the batting order, in spite of his league-leading hundred and seventy-seven strikeouts: an astounding iconoclasm. They understood that Bellhorn also walked a lot and had unexpected clout—high marks according to the OPS mantra (on base plus slugging) that drives modern baseball thinking. Bellhorn's homers in the post-season—to the farthest left-field corner against the Yankees and to nearest right against the Cardinals, like disappearing pool-table shots—were game-altering shocks.

A day later, I had to come home from Fenway Park to take care of another post-season cold and recover from the five-hour, twelve-inning Game Four, which had concluded at one-twenty in the morning with a two-run walk-off home run smacked by, who else, David Ortiz. No bloop or feeble bouncer in these meetings failed to matter now—certainly not the uncharacteristic ball four thrown by Mariano Rivera to Kevin Millar to start the bottom of the ninth of that game. With the Yanks standing at 4–3, and three outs away from another World Series, Francona inserted his jackrabbit, Dave Roberts, as a pinch-runner: the exact task, almost the very inning, for which he'd been hired. Away he flew on a terrific first-pitch jump—barely safe as Jorge Posada's peg bent a fraction to the left—and here he came, home in a flash, as Mueller's single nipped past Mariano's reflexive stab. We were tied, and this evening and perhaps this series still in early days.



The next evening, Monday, I'd planned on an easy convalescence at the set, with a drink and some dinner, but in no time the baseball had reimposed its grip and had me writhing over its tensions and pauses and "God, now what"s, as I fixed on the bright screen. Both starters—the Yankees' Mike Mussina and Pedro again for the Sox—were taken away after six, and their early replacements from the cadres of worn-down relievers and starters-turned-relievers trudged into view, each with prolongment in mind. The Sox came down to their last six outs, and the cameras, sweeping the first-base-side stands at gelid Fenway, brought us closeups of a ten- or twelve-year-old kid peeking out from between his fingers, a grandmother in a rally cap, a couple of glum youngsters in Sox war paint, and a woman with stylish dark-red nail polish on her long fingers, which were clasped to the side of her face in imitation of "The Scream." Unbearable.

The Sox catch-up—a solo Ortiz home run, and, in replica of the night before, another Millar walk, a hit-and-run advance for the inserted Roberts, and a delivering single—provided only brief cheer and on we went, at 4–4, past a fourth hour, then a fifth, with close calls and botched bunts, and stranded hopes and runners piling up amid the slowly turning innings. Low on fuel, the Ameriquest advertising blimp headed for the barn. The game's eventualities at last brought Wakefield on to pitch for the Sox in the twelfth. As a starting knuckleballer, he generally paired with the second-string catcher, Doug Mirabelli, a nanny for the wanton pitch, but removing the powerful Varitek from the lineup was not an option here. As we know, the knuckler devises its own flight path after it leaves the pitcher's hand, and Sheffield, the Yankee leadoff man in the thirteenth, struck out on a fritillary that darted away from his bat and Varitek's mitt as well, delivering the batter safe at first. A force-play out put Matsui there in his place, and then, oopsie, over to second on a further Varitek embarrassment, and—yikes!—to third, on still another sailer. Smiling wanly, the rooters foresaw a fresh end: the Red Sox eliminated by a butterfly. Sierra, at bat with two on and two out, swung through the three-and-two and missed it cleanly, as Varitek, a mastiff

EARPHONES

Autumn in our kitchen, hooked up
to a discman (Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin),
I become the music with earphones on:
no noise-as-usual inside my skull,
I can do things so the doing seems to be coming
from not-me, I am so expert and prolific
at rutabaga soup, peeling and chopping with such prowess,
spicing with panache, fussily tasting and adjusting,
even cleaning the pot and utensils, wiping the counter,
the sink, the cutting board—so happy, my darling,
that I despite myself have made something good for you
you will never have to suffer or work for.
Look, it's waiting in your favorite blue bowl
with fresh bread and wine beside it.
Come, sit, my loveliness, my blessing:
Come, sit, and eat it with me.

—*Michael Ryan*

after a song sparrow, jumped at the ball and swallowed it clean. Not much later, the game finished on a glorious anticlimax, a run-scoring, broken-bat bloop by the ever-up, ever-useful Ortiz.

After Schilling, the Yankees were done. Repaired by the orthopedists, he threw seven dominating innings at the Stadium—it was Game Six now—as the Sox drew even. Showing fewer of his high, four-seam fastballs, he stayed obdurately low and away to batters on each side of the plate, and killed them off with his split-finger. Or as his manager said afterward, "He pitched his ass off." The Yankee staff, worn to tatters, was out of options and on the final evening gave up six Boston runs in the first two innings. Kevin Brown, departing the scene in the second amid heavy booing, left the bases loaded for his successor, Javier Vazquez, who was taken deep on his first pitch, that slam by Johnny Damon. Over.

The Sox, who had looked to be in such danger during their high-risk, long-odds comeback, in truth dominated their old rivals shockingly toward the end, when the last huge sounds from the Yankee bleacherites came with a flurry of thrown bottles and debris late in the Schilling game. Alex Rodriguez, trying to beat out an infield bouncer, had slapped the ball out of a covering pitcher's grasp at first base (it was Arroyo, on in relief of Schilling), and when the umps would have none of it—calling A-Rod out and taking a Yankee run off the boards—the ugly response made me sit back and wish for winter.

Schilling's doctors had sutured around a loose tendon on his right ankle, holding it in place while that foot pushed off violently, again and again, from the rubber. This was repeated before he pitched against the Cardinals in the second game of the World Series, but team doctors expressed doubt that there could have been a further patch-up for a third start, which never came. When his ankle began to leak blood onto his sock in the Yankee outing—you could see it on the press-box TV monitors—I thought of Roy Hobbs's symbolic oozings at the end of "The Natural." Schilling, in fact, is the ultimate contemporary athlete-hero. Now thirty-eight years old, he is six-five, with a gold chain, blond locks, an outsized jaw, and a curving, massive upper torso that reminds you of Roger Clemens. He mentions God in the interview room and is lavish in praise of his teammates, and he is no doubt aware of the C.E.O. assurance that he casts over the clubhouse and the stadium. Intelligent and organized, he keeps elaborate notes about each hitter in the league, and argues theory with his catcher and coaches. He negotiated his own enormous contract with the Red Sox, and now he has made it plain that he is not being overpaid. He was hired specifically to beat the Yankees and then win a World Series, and—check, check—he's got that done. Every professional athlete is confident, and many of them have ignored pain while competing under extraordinary conditions—Kirk Gibson comes to mind—but the combination of courage and sliders and ego and corporate planning we got from Schilling over two games felt different, and not connected to the great performances or great players of the past. So long, Bambino.

I didn't think much about all my Red Sox fan-friends until the World Series was over. Now they are triumphant, and their old pains and desperate attachments have become historic and quirky. They won't need their amulets and game-watching rituals anymore—the stuff that was mentioned in so many of the TV news stories the day after, and in some New England newspaper feature stories. A copy of the Bangor *Daily News* mentioned a family in Old Town that mowed a "Go, Sox" pattern in the lawn, and a ninety-four-year-old lady in Lakeville, Massachusetts, who made herself a little ceramic Fenway Park each year, with porcelain nuns at play inside. This stuff may go on, but, like the Sox home games next year, it will be terrific fun but not the same. Perhaps trying to hold on to something, I got in touch with a bygone Red Sox hero, the pitcher Jim Lonborg, who had won two games in the World Series of 1967 and lost the last one, Game Seven, to Bob Gibson, whom he'd faced on two days' rest. Lonborg is a dentist in Hanover, Massachusetts, and he called me back after he'd finished with his first patient of the day. He told me that he still got back to Fenway Park to see the Sox three or four times each year, and he admired the energy of this new bunch. So far, none of his old teammates had called, but a few friends had, savoring the day. He'd watched the last World Series game with his twenty-seven-year-old daughter, Nora—he has six children—and they'd high-fived after the Sox won.

"That's all?" I said. "Only a high-five?"

"Well, there were more neighbors and family here when we watched the last game against the Yankees," he said, almost apologetically. "When that was over, Nora ran up and jumped in my arms and knocked me across a table." ♦

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A store on La Goutte d'Or, an Arab street in Paris. In much of Europe today, a veiled girl in a classroom is considered a provocation.

Photographs by Gilles Peress.

LETTER FROM EUROPE

TAKING THE VEIL

How France's public schools became the battleground in a culture war.

BY JANE KRAMER

Not long ago, in Paris, I met a young Muslim woman named Djamila Benrehab, who, at the age of twenty, had donned not only a black head scarf but a billowy black *abaya* and, under it all, a tight black bandanna to her eyebrows that left only the circle of her face exposed. Djamila is a big, apple-cheeked, endearing person. She speaks a beautiful lilting French, and is intelligent and quite charming. Her dream is to leave Paris and go to Brooklyn, where, she has heard, Muslim girls go veiled and nobody minds, and, in any case, "it can't be worse than here." She wants to study international relations at Brooklyn College, and to qualify she is learning English at the University of Paris 13, six and a half miles from the housing projects of Garges-lès-Gonesse, where she lives with her parents, her two brothers, and a teen-age sister. But when she "made my choice . . . to announce my identity," she wasn't thinking of Brooklyn. She was married to a Muslim boy whom she knew from high school—and will not discuss except to say that his behavior was "not with God." She was so unhappy, she says, that she bought her first Koran and started to read, nights, while he was out drinking. It wasn't long before she left him and moved back to her parents' apartment. But she kept on reading. When she came to one of the passages about veils—which many Muslim feminists maintain do not so much prescribe veils as record that the wives of the Prophet went veiled and in this way were able to recognize one another and to be honored by other women for their distinction—she prayed and fasted and decided to wear one, too. Her mother, who comes from Algeria and had never been veiled, was horrified by her new clothes. "You'll waste your youth," she kept saying. But Djamila persisted. "I just said to my mom, 'I'm going to wear them.' I was attached to my decision. She didn't deter me, and now she's veiled, too."

It hasn't been easy for Djamila. She left her first job, as a teacher's aide, after parents complained that a woman in veils was not a good role model for little girls. She asked for a week off to think this over, and then offered to compromise by wearing a high rolled collar and her scarf, "just something that would cover my neck and hair," but the complaints continued and she had to quit. She went for job interviews and was always turned down. But her robes got longer and more concealing. People swore at her in the Métro. Strangers accused her of carrying bombs in her book bag. ("I said to myself, '*Tant pis!* I am not a terrorist.' ") Once, when we were leaving a Paris café, a man at the next table reached up and stroked her robe, though, it being a Left Bank café, he said "Chic!" and she said, "Thank you." The only job she could get, finally, was with a telemarketing service—where, of course, she was simply a nice French voice selling something on the phone.

By last year, she was going to mosque several times a week, and her life, by her own admission, was narrowing. The police told her that they couldn't renew her identity card with her head covered in the picture. (She uncovered it, crying, but, like the Strasbourg schoolgirl, much featured in the French press, who shaved her head rather than show her hair, she had taken the precaution of clipping hers so that no one who checked the card would see it.) Then the amateur theatre company where only a few years earlier she had starred as Andromache in Racine's tragedy and as Desdemona, in "Othello," said that she couldn't continue acting if she was veiled onstage. (She says that Othello, being a Moor in Venice, might easily insist that his wife be veiled and that Desdemona, being a loving, dutiful wife, might just as easily want to prove her loyalty by obliging him; it is, at the very least, an interesting interpretation.) Then the women's basketball team in her neighborhood said that she couldn't play unless she put on a uniform of shorts and a T-shirt. And then she heard that you couldn't marry in city hall in Muslim clothes, and that distressed her, too, although she has no plans for getting remarried. The men she sees are her imam and the men in her family, and I suspect that any marriage she makes now will be arranged. She has found a Muslim women's basketball team and even a Muslim women's karate group, but she misses acting. She still rehearses in her sleep. "We are not the same as other people," she said, when I asked how she felt "excluded," but the truth is that, from the perspective of most other Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, she has excluded herself.

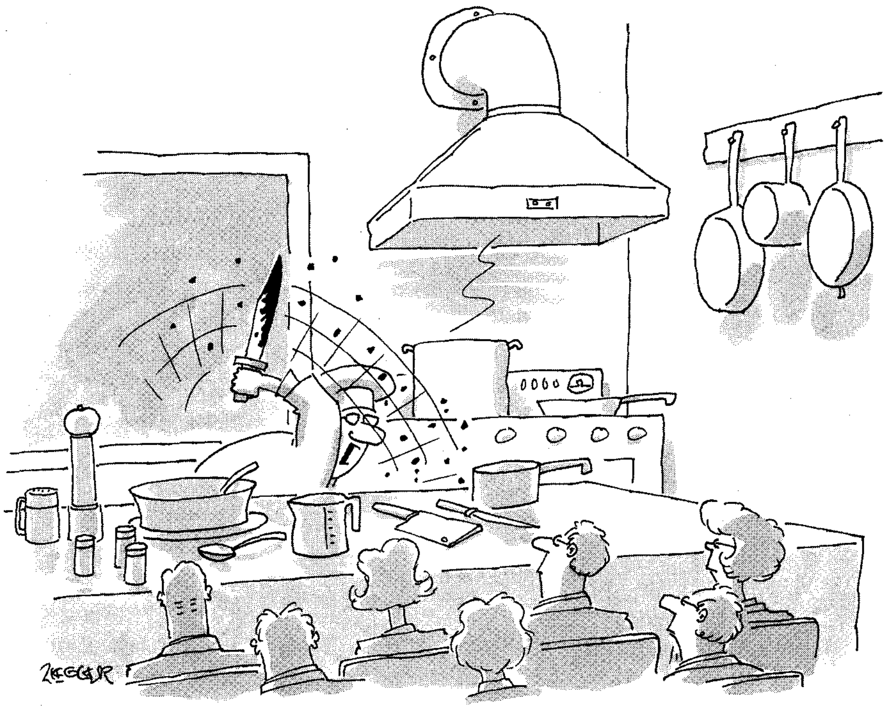
What does a secular Western society like France do with a woman like Djamila? The French tell you, as President Jacques Chirac told me when we talked at the Élysée last spring, that it begins with school, that "France" is an idea of citizenship, an identity forged in the neutral space of its public schools—in what Jules Ferry, the nineteenth-century father of French secular education, is said to have called the "*école sanctuaire*." There is really no place for religious expression or exceptionalism in those public schools, but this is precisely what many of the country's Muslims—and there are five to six million of them, nearly a tenth of the population—are demanding. Muslims today are part of the biggest labor migration in Europe since the great migrations of the Roman Empire; some analysts at the European Union say that in fifteen years they could account for twenty per cent of its population. They are part of a vast post-colonial diaspora—uprooted, often recruited, and for the most part unwelcome, unassimilated, and poor—and in France today they are also part of a social revolution: "the war between Islamic fundamentalism and secular fundamentalism," as people on both sides say.

"And it's close to the subway."

Four years ago, when Djamila began to follow Sharia, or traditional Islamic law, she was, according to French law, an adult, capable of choice. Her sister, who is seventeen, is by law a child. She isn't veiled, but she goes to high school with girls who have been since the age of twelve, and who see no reason that they shouldn't stay veiled in a French classroom. By last year, as many as two or three thousand girls were said to be going to school veiled in one manner or another in Islamic head scarves, and as often as not were told to remove them or be sent home. France's public-school teachers had been complaining for years about veils, and Chirac himself—normally a cautious President—was getting impatient. In August of 2003, he asked a highly respected former cabinet minister by the name of Bernard Stasi, who serves as his official ombudsman in matters involving French secularism, to put together a commission on what the President called "the application of the principle of *laïcité* in the Republic." Stasi selected nineteen members, among them three Muslims, three Jews, and six women. (Djamila's last mayor, Nelly Olin, was one of them.) What they had in common was a belief in the separation of church and state; they were chosen to determine whether the laws on that were sufficient or needed to be clarified.

Chirac clearly felt that the time had come to make a tough, resoundingly "French" statement on secularism. He wanted to seal his leadership in the spring elections (regional in March, European in June; both routs, as it happened). And he wanted to do it well before the school year that began this fall, with hundreds of thousands of Muslim children enrolled in the country's public-school system—if for no reason other than that the school year will end on the centenary of the law that formally and, everyone then assumed, irrevocably established the separation of church and state in France. Of course, in 1905 it was also assumed that the only possible challenge to the "sacred secularism" of a French public education lay not in the cut of a Muslim's scarf but in the size of the cross on a Catholic schoolgirl's gold chain.

The politicians of 1905 had celebrated the end of a long struggle for reconciliation between the values of a republican state and its mainly Catholic citizens. When they thought about Muslim schoolgirls—assuming they thought about them at all—they kept those girls at some safe, imaginary remove, studying their Voltaire and their Balzac and their French rivers in the public schools and Catholic mission schools of the country's North African empire. (Most French Muslims are North African in origin.) No one then expected that by the turn of another century there would be millions of Muslims at home in France. Or that a lot of those Muslims would be young, angry, alienated, impressionable, and demanding their particular French "identity" in ways that not even the great prestidigitator of French identity, Charles de Gaulle, would have been able to accommodate. Or that a French President called Jacques Chirac—who got his start in a Gaullist cabinet and went on to become a Gaullist prime minister and then a Gaullist mayor of Paris, and was even now conducting a very Gaullist war of words with his American counterpart on just about every subject from the war in Iraq to the size of the European Union—would sponsor a ban on veils in French schools. But this is precisely what the President did. On March 15, 2004, he signed into law two sentences culled from the Stasi Commission's report, passed by both houses of France's parliament, and known officially as Article 141-5-1 of Law No. 2004-228 of the national Code d'Éducation: "In public elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, it is forbidden to wear symbols or clothes through which students conspicuously"—*ostensiblement*—"display their religious affiliation. Internal rules require that a dialogue with the student precede the enforcement of any disciplinary procedure."



"Once the animal has been rendered lifeless, the rest is quite simple."

With those two sentences, as short and slippery as the Second Amendment, the French opened a box of troubles that flew onto the front page and the evening news. The British, congenitally anti-French, were pleasantly horrified by the law. The Germans—for years France's closest European allies—were embarrassed by it. Some Americans assumed that Satan was involved. Antonin Scalia, writing the dissent in a U.S. Supreme Court decision, in February, to uphold the right of states to deny public scholarship aid to Bible-ministry students, took the occasion to add that the French were "invoking interests in secularism no less benign than those the court embraces today." Not long afterward, Attorney General John Ashcroft, pointedly challenging France's godless example, filed an amicus curiae on behalf of a veiled Muslim twelve-year-old who had recently been suspended from an Oklahoma elementary school.

In France itself, there were demonstrations of veiled women, demonstrations of unveiled women, endless television debates, rap wars on the Muslim hip-hop circuit, and windy discussions in all the important papers. (*Libération*, on the left, and *Le Figaro*, on the right, were for the law; *Le Monde*, always contrarian, was against it.) The arguments began months before the law was passed and went on long after the President signed it. They made for a good deal of inadvertent comedy, most notably from a couple of adolescent schoolgirls—daughters of an agnostic Jewish father and a Berber mother—who had scrabbled together a book of their own *pensées* and were making the talk-show rounds wrapped up in color-coördinated pastel scarves, cashmere cardigans, and cowl-neck sweaters. But there was also a good deal of defiance. There were threats of schoolgirl strikes, threats of huge sympathy strikes, threats of mass lawsuits, and, with them, of years of judicial snarl. And there were serious threats of violence—terrorist threats, threats of Islamist reprisals—as well as warnings that came in the form of carefully coded messages to the country's Muslim women's-rights activists. One was an open letter from Hani Ramadan, the head of a Geneva group that tracks the heresies and blasphemies of the Islamic diaspora in Europe. Ramadan is the grandson of the Egyptian cleric Hassan Al-Banna, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood, and, as it happens, the brother of Tariq Ramadan, a celebrity scholar who travels the European lecture circuit promoting what could be called Islamism Lite for the Western world. (Tariq is best known in the United States as the professor whose visa to teach at Notre Dame was revoked by the Administration, for reasons suggesting that the government got the two Ramadan boys confused.) Hani Ramadan's letter was addressed to Nadia Amiri, a French feminist and former nurse with a master's degree in sociology. It said that a Muslim who forgets her duty to "submit entirely to God and only to God . . . turns ineluctably toward idolatry." Amiri was already on a police hot line. Today, when she gets a message like that, a police car patrols her street.

Still, despite, or maybe because of, the reactions, there turned out to be a genuine, if fairly conflicted, desire on the part of the French to affirm the principle of secularism in their public schools. (And the law is only about those schools. It isn't about people on the street, or people at work, or people praying, or, for that matter, about people at universities, where all but a handful of students are over eighteen and, legally, adults, and perfectly free to come to class in anything they like; it is about minors who, by law, enter the protective custody of the secular state when they walk into a public-school classroom.) At least, enough people thought that an affirmation was necessary. Maybe the timing was wrong. Maybe the law was cynical. Certainly, it touched on only the surface of France's problems, doing nothing at all to redress a long history of indifference to the millions of French Muslim citizens still referred to mainly as "the immigrants." Even some Stasi Commission members complained that, of the twenty-six proposals in their report, many addressing significant social and economic inequities that Muslims in France face, only the one about head scarves was actually adopted. "There was this rush to implement," one of them told me. "We'd seen all the notables, and all the people with problems, but most of the real people, the real part of our work—that was shrunk to the minimum. We had proposals on teaching religion in schools, on hospitals, on jobs. We weren't in such a hurry to focus on the veil." The "rush to implement" a veil law had effectively tabled those other proposals, but the commissioners also knew that passing along to the legislature a package of twenty-six complicated, costly proposals would mean a debate that could last for years, and nobody wanted that.

In the end, people said: Do it. Ninety-four per cent of the deputies who voted said yes to the new law, if not with enthusiasm then with a certain relief in being able to slip under the cover of such huge numbers. "We are world champions at lawmaking," Christine Ockrent, who has anchored the evening news on two channels, run the weekly *L'Express*, and, as she says, "seen everything," told me a few days after the law was signed. "We proceed not by consensus but by crises and fake collective agreements. . . . Yes, nearly everyone voted for the law, but the most lucid said, 'This law only revealed the basic incapacity of the system to integrate our immigrants.' "

To say that France rejects what it sees as America's persistent impulse toward a theocratized state—and even regards the rhetoric that drives our policy today as unnervingly close to the rhetoric of jihad—is merely to say that France was savaged by wars of religion for hundreds of years and that those wars have left most of the French, the President among them, with a dread of mixing government and God. Not that this guarantees *fraternité*, or even *égalité*, but it does go some way toward explaining the peculiarities of French public life, such as the fact that political candidates do not make speeches or pose for campaign posters in front of a church (or for that matter a synagogue or a mosque); or that state funerals take place in deconsecrated churches, like the Panthéon, and not in Notre-Dame; or that the state absorbs eighty-five per cent of the costs at qualifying parochial schools precisely in order to keep the church out of the public classroom. "I'm not saying to export it, but laicity is part of the social contract in France," President Chirac said, simply, when I first asked him about the veil law. "The state does not put a foot in any belief. It is a very French conception, and we hold to it. . . . Religion is not a subject we impose on French children. The law is because of that." Most French people—including mainstream French Muslims—would agree, at least in principle. It is mainly foreigners who are mystified that a country which has tried as single-mindedly as France to avoid any unnecessary confrontations with the Muslim world would risk its obvious

FLAT FIX
AIR
AUTO REPAIR

LIGHT FINGERS

Feather duster in a child's grip
swished over bottles of Old Grand-Dad
in my father's liquor store,
my hand hovering briefly
above rolls of coin in the cash drawer,

other objects stolen from local merchants—
a magnifying glass,
a hi-lo thermometer, an Indian-rubber baseball,
novelties, candy, cigarettes—

if you wouldn't give me what I deserved,
what you seemed to promise,
then I would take it from you.
The splendor of scissors.
The consideration of a rubber stamp
"for your attention."

At some point, after the accumulation
of the objects of desire,
and later, after they became unforgettable,
beyond understanding and useless,

this is when I looked back and saw the boy
making a daring effort to be part
of the family's sadness.

All of the grief that preceded me—
war, fire, the destruction of culture,
the powerlessness of parents,
the compensations of shameful inward lives—

this, I perceived, is simply what it means
to be human. So now there is nothing
to wrest into myself,
for myself.
But there is the spirit leaping with dread

and exultation, demanding everything.
And the old cunning.

When Mrs. O'Brien suggested that Joseph,
her son, and I go to see his priest
about our common venal behavior,
my mother, a Holocaust survivor,
threw her out of the house.

I returned to my favorite pastime:
a book of sleight-of-hand tricks,
small objects, all objects, vanishing.

—*Ron Slate*

advantage with a law essentially about scarves on schoolgirls.

In a way, Chirac personifies that inscrutable French logic with which his countrymen have identified so often and so predictably that it's almost redundant to state it. He is a prickly nationalist who, at the same time, wants to set the agenda, and reap the benefits, of Europe. He is an internationalist who nevertheless believes that "the world is little by little evolving into *grands blocs*," each of them utterly and perhaps irremediably itself—which is to say not French. He is a very successful politician with no notable achievements beyond the remarkable one of building the machine that has kept him at the center of power for nearly forty years, and President for nearly ten. He is an eloquent, agile, and frequently moving statesman who has nurtured an idea of France—an idea of high civilization and moral purpose—while fielding accusations of the most venal sorts of corruption at home, and who will in all likelihood be indicted for some of them once he is out of office and no longer immune from prosecution. (One accusation had to do with his padding the family food bills when he was mayor of Paris by what amounts to more than a quarter of a million dollars a year.) He anoints dauphins, then turns on any of them who presume that they might succeed him. He is thick-skinned, seemingly impervious to attack, but unforgiving in matters of deference and respect. (One minister, none too useful to begin with, mentioned a Presidential hearing aid and was out of the cabinet in a matter of months.) He is personally quite appealing. Women like him, the possible exception being his wife, Bernadette, who talks wryly to reporters about her husband's infidelities, and told the *Times* that she turns off her cell phone on busy days, to keep the President from disturbing her "every fifteen minutes."

And Chirac is full of surprises, as his veil law proved. One diplomat told me about the "hidden" Chirac, a man who slips off to Japanese digs and is an enthusiast of Taino art and corresponds with Jiang Zemin on the subject of classical Chinese poetry. Never mind if the Chirac most people see is an old fox who thrives on the exasperation he inspires, especially if it involves the United States. His distaste for George W. Bush is shared. Two years ago, with an Iraq weapons-inspection extension on the Security Council table, he dispatched his Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, to the United Nations to tell a startled Colin Powell that, inspections or not, there were never going to be French soldiers fighting in Iraq unless the U.N. sent them, thus forcing the Security Council stalemate that ended with America's invasion. This summer, he sent Michel Barnier—the man who took over at the Quai d'Orsay when Villepin left to become Interior Minister—to call on Yasir Arafat at his compound at a moment when most European leaders had joined America in trying to replace him.

The French, however grudging, do not misread their President. Nor do they find him inconsistent. They may not love him. They may consider him imperious or ineffectual or wrong. But most of them raise a glass when he takes the high ground and scores a point for France, as he did at the D Day ceremonies this summer, welcoming Bush to Normandy with such cool good manners and gracious solemnity that Bush was reduced to a kind of glazed rage in his eyes and clenched fists. The French do not expect their Presidents to be honest or good, only that they be Presidential.

"To give you my vision of France, it's necessary first to give you my vision of the world," Chirac told me, when I asked him about French secularism. He wanted this clear: he does not believe that the world can be remade in France's image (and certainly not in anyone else's image), and this wasn't an unreasonable assessment, since France does not own large chunks of the world anymore or, indeed, have anything like the power to remake it. Nor does he doubt that most of the world holds values that are radically and perhaps irrevocably different from Western values. "The time when we imposed our values is over," he said, when I asked about his ongoing argument with America, and America's with him. He talked about the lessons of colonialism. "We made bad mistakes, we did many good things, but it's over." Given his map of the world as *grands blocs* with little in common except an ur-

Djamila Benrehab, right, and her sister. Ten years ago, few French-born Muslim women wore veils, and those who did were often n

gent need to avoid collision, and given the tensions among them now—with America, to his mind, playing the rogue *bloc*—he clearly feels that France's, and indeed Europe's, historical role will be to mediate those tensions. (He thinks that America would also do well, as he put it, somewhat more grandly, "to privilege dialogue over force.") The bottom line is that he will not bend France to anybody else's values, either. He is very precise about that. A Frenchman, and this means also a Muslim Frenchman, accepts that at home the values of France, and certainly its secular imperatives, are not up for negotiation—which is why, now that the veil has come to be what he calls "the siege of a politics of Islamization," it has no place in a French public classroom.

Most people in France know Article 141-5-1 simply as the veil law—*la loi contre le voile*—or as the head-scarf law, or the chador or burka or hejab or *jalabib* or *abaya* or *nikab* or even bandanna law, or anything else they choose, mostly inaccurately, to call the clothing with which an increasing number of French Muslim schoolgirls had been covering their heads, and often their faces and bodies, and attempting to come to class. ("Veil," in France, is the catchall word.) And never mind that, as of the latest hermeneutical negotiations, the veil law also applies to the Jewish skullcap, the Sikh turban, and to any cross that looks *ostensiblement* religious—a term that could be said to describe any religious symbol that's simply visible, or there.

"It is a small price to pay for tranquillity" is how Michael Williams, the chief rabbi of the Synagogue Copernic, the oldest reform synagogue in France—and, in 1980, the first to be bombed by extremists—explains the fact that most French Christians and Jews, while not precisely in favor of laws like that, were

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xpressing anything more political than piety.

quite willing to accept one. In much of Europe today, a veiled girl in a public-school classroom is considered a provocation, and not always by her own choice. In the French Republic, with its huge Muslim population, she also stands for a very particular contemporary Islamic-diaspora politics having to do with the application of Koranic law (which is to say one narrow interpretation of Koranic law) to the comportment and rights of minors in the public spaces of a secular state. Ten years ago, young French-born Muslim women were seldom veiled, and the few who were veiled were often, like Djamila, expressing nothing more political than piety or modesty or virtue. Today, they are more apt to be expressing subservience to (or fear of) the radical indoctrination of young French-born Muslim men. The politicians call it the "communitarian recruitment" of those young men—many of them born and raised in the huge housing projects, just across the ring roads of central Paris and the big industrial towns of the northeast, that the French call *les cités*—by Islamist provocateurs, protection racketeers, and preachers.

I saw my first Islamist recruitment in the mid-eighties in Dreux, a town near Chartres with a small but decent measure of assimilation. Dreux was losing its factories to the long attrition of a global oil crisis about twelve years earlier, and to the end of another kind of recruitment—the recruitment of unskilled labor that had already brought some six thousand Muslim workers to a town of twenty-four thousand people. With steadily rising unemployment, Dreux was having to deal with what amounted to an angry redneck generation of men thrown up by the seemingly unstoppable drift of labor from farm to factory. And this meant dealing with incursions not only of radical Islamist preachers but also of anti-immigrant agitators, from Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front party, into the projects where most of Dreux's workers, Christian and Muslim, lived. One of the North Africans I knew there was recruited by an itinerant holy man, a Muslim Brother who appeared one day at the gate of his factory. In no time at all, he had forsworn his chess nights, and even his nights out at the local café, for a men's group then devoted to studying the Koranic criteria for cutting off robbers' hands, and he was making plans to send his wife and three small daughters back home to a town in the Algerian desert, out of the way of wanton Western influence, their own small freedoms, and, of course, the National Front.

The Islamist network was fairly simple then. Saudis funded the Brotherhood through its leadership in Egypt; the Brotherhood, in turn, trained Algerian and Moroccan preachers and sent them off to conquer the diaspora in towns like Dreux. Those preachers were self-styled vigilantes. They stalked the North African schoolboys, demanding recruits for their after-school Koran classes—threatening and often beating the ones who refused, but always offering free textbooks to the ones who came and "protection" to their parents. Within a few months, those boys were the vigilantes, exhorting their classmates to embrace the kind of Islam they had always mocked as something that, in France, only illiterate peasants from Anatolia practiced. The recruitment spread, acknowledged but as often as not ignored, since, from the point of view of the government, and certainly of the police, the preachers seemed to be serving a useful purpose: policing their own neighborhoods, keeping them quiet, and keeping violence contained and crime "disciplined." The veil made an easy symbol, perhaps because only women would have to wear it. And it represented another kind of discipline—the discipline of a profound revolt. In 1989, when no more than a few hundred schoolgirls were reported by their teachers or principals to be wearing head scarves, three Muslim girls were put on probation and sent home from a middle school in the working-class *cité* of Creil, north of Paris, for refusing to remove them. Their fathers, backed by the local Islamists, went to court. The court ruled for them. But the case itself, the first of its kind in France, got so much lurid attention—one manifesto, published in *Nouvel Observateur*, called the ruling "a scholastic Munich"—that Lionel Jospin, then the Education Minister in a Socialist cabinet, asked the Conseil d'État for teachers' "guidelines," thus sidestepping the problem of setting some himself or embarrassing his President, François Mitterrand, by demanding that *he* set them. The Conseil tossed the problem back to the schools, telling the principals to address the problem case by case, saying that it all depended on whether a principal found the clothes in question to be acceptable or defiant. (The term used then was *ostentatoire*, or ostentatious.)

No one was much guided by those guidelines. The left, whatever its old claims to being the guarantor of a secular state, was adrift in a sea of unforeseen (and almost comically unsettling) new imperatives having to do with multiculturalism and diversity and political correctness, unable to decide the relative merits of freedom of religious expression and freedom *from* religious expression. (Louisa Ferhat, an actress who tours the country speaking for an organization of French Berber women, told me that whenever friends on the left would say, "Ah, but we must understand the culture of the veil," she would have to remind them that nearly two million of France's Muslims were Kabyle Berbers, not Arabs, and that Kabyle women were "culturally" never veiled in their own villages in Algeria, and only occasionally in the Arabs' cities.) Dominique Strauss-Kahn, a former Socialist Finance Minister and a shrewd observer of his party's wafflings, describes this now as a kind of Sophie's choice between "the democracy solution," which acknowledges differences, and "the republic solution," which says that when you're a citizen you behave like one. He told me that even in those comparatively tranquil days you were never going to be able to solve the problem of social neglect and Islamist subversion by reducing it "to a matter of a few thousand schoolgirls with a little piece of cotton on their heads."

No one, of course, knows what would have happened if a law like Article 141-5-1 had been proposed and debated and passed in 1989, though it's probably safe to say that the scarf in France was then the sign of a local problem, not a global one. France had lost thirteen people to terrorist bombings in the mid-eighties, and had since put a frankly self-serving—and fairly successful—purchase on safety, infuriating its European allies by negotiating that safety with Muslim groups and even Muslim governments. It was no secret that France was courting Middle Eastern clients, though the preference was clearly for states like Algeria and Iraq, where the power, however despotic, was secular, and where France had had a historical influence. Its dealings in the Middle East were hardly savory (though it has to be said that no one's were). By the first Gulf War, in the winter of 1990-91, the French had built a nuclear reactor for Iraq (Israel bombed it in 1981), and had sold Saddam Hussein more than twenty-three billion dollars' worth of arms and a fleet of Mirage bombers (including the intercept codes, a gesture of friendship which kept France's own bombers off the ground for the critical first two weeks of that war). By the time the current war in Iraq started, Saddam's debt to France amounted to upward of four billion dollars—one obvious reason for Chirac's reluctance to join it, as he had joined the first one and the war in Afghanistan in 2001. (There is now a French commander of NATO's Afghan occupation forces.)

I was in France during the first Gulf War, and the remarkable thing then was how calm the country stayed—which is to say how calm its Muslims stayed, how French their loyalties were, how marginal the Islamist preachers still seemed. That changed. In December of 1991, France stood by while its old colony of Algeria, a police state by anybody's standards, cancelled the results of elections that would have put a coalition of imams and Islamist parties in power—and then, covering its bases, accepted the Algerian Islamists who fled to France as religious refugees under the Geneva Convention. They arrived just as a new generation of French Algerians were starting high school in the *cités* where they were born—young citizens with French expectations and, maybe because of this, not much patience for French promises and French intolerance and French exclusion camouflaged by a very French rhetoric of equality and integration. That generation had no claims on a colonial past. What they inherited were the bitter myths of their parents' past, untempered by any of their parents' nostalgia or desperate gratitude. What they lived were the bitter realities of the present.

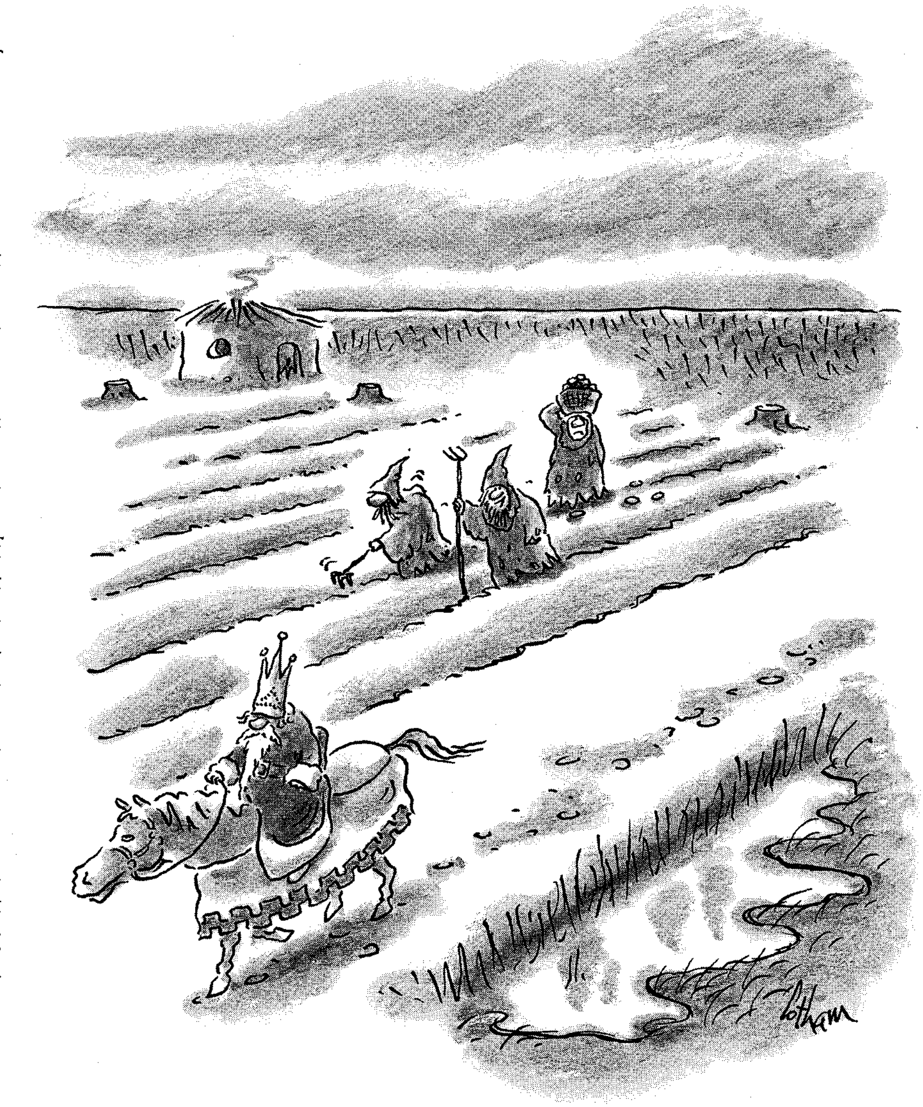
The *cités* themselves were a failed fantasy of a new life, a misbegotten experiment in social planning that began with Le Corbusier's famous Unité d'Habitation, in Marseilles, and spread through France and into the rest of northern Europe. Nothing that should have happened in the *cités* happened. Big businesses did not arrive; bourgeois families did not build housing estates next door; the projects themselves deteriorated, victim to construction boondoggles. The children of immigrants who had moved in, expecting a new life, became the prisoners of that life. The future they wanted shimmered across the ring roads of urban France, always receding into someone else's neighborhood. In their own neighborhoods, there was not much to look forward to besides a thwarted education (only four per cent of them make it to university) and no jobs (sixty per cent unemployment in some of the *cités* today) and the strained services of the welfare state and, of course, the immigrant imams with their new promises, telling them that the world was theirs. They were going to take back their communities "for God," starting with the community of their own families—with the women, with the veil. As an exercise, it was not so different from what the Marxist psychiatrist Frantz Fanon described, forty-four years ago in French-colonial Algeria, when he wrote that the last "property" of a desperate man, a man who had lost everything, was his family—that to own a family was to own something. Fanon's patients, in the middle of another revolution against the French, had recurring nightmares of their wives and daughters and sisters spinning out of the orbit of their control, and it was nightmares like those that the Islamists tapped in France.

Then, of course, September 11th happened and, more to the point, the invasion of Iraq. It didn't matter that France stayed out of the war; France was the West, regardless. This was when the recruitment of young French Muslim men into the terror network feeding the Chechen and Afghan and Iraqi insurgencies picked up in earnest, with Osama making his début as a start-up image on cell phones and Islamist Web sites—an action hero brandishing a Kalashnikov. It was also when an increasing number of Muslim schoolgirls started attempting to enter classrooms draped in clothing that had less to do with the places their families came from than with a kind of global ur-Islam, which may be why it was dismissed, for a while, as some sort of adolescent fad. Sometimes it was. But more often those girls were under orders from their fathers and uncles and brothers and even their male classmates. For the boys, transforming a bluejeaned teen-age sister into a docile and observant "Muslim" virgin was a *rite de passage* into authority, the fast track to becoming a man and, more important, a Muslim man. For the girls themselves, it was the beginning of a series of small exemptions from Frenchness—no sports, no biology, no Voltaire—that in the end had nothing to do with diversity and everything to do with isolation. It was also a license for violence. Girls who did not conform were excoriated, or chased, or beaten by fanatical young men meting out "Islamic justice." Sometimes, the girls were gangraped. In 2002, an unveiled Muslim girl in the *cité* of Vitry-sur-Seine was burned alive by a boy she had turned down.

Jacques Chirac turns seventy-two this month and will be nearly seventy-five when the next Presidential election is held. But, by all evidence, he is determined to run for what would be his third term, and many of the people who swept him into office last time now feel that his last dauphin and latest rival, Nicolas Sarkozy—a self-made lawyer who claims to come from "reality," which is to say not from the icy heights of the École Nationale d'Administration, where most French leaders, including the President, are groomed and stamped "ruling class"—would do much better at maneuvering the country through its new Islamist thickets. Sarkozy was, at any rate, the one government minister to speak publicly against the veil law, perhaps because he was already courting the Muslim vote in his own Presidential bid. That vote has been pretty much untapped since the end of the Algerian War, in 1962, brought the first great wave of North African immigrants to France. No Muslim candidates from any of the big parties have been given a shot at election districts they might actually win; there still isn't a French Muslim in the National Assembly or the Senate. And, given the alienation of the Muslim poor, not to mention the fact that French law forbids census questions about religious or ethnic affiliation, it is impossible for anyone (except, presumably, the secret services) to know how many Muslims vote anyway.

Sarkozy spent two years as Minister of the Interior, and it was from that post that he started his run for the Presidency, in 2003, sponsoring and then accrediting a Muslim umbrella group called the French Council of the Muslim Religion. He argued, with some justice, that French Catholics were already represented by the Church hierarchy, and that Protestants and Jews had independent consistories to represent their interests, whereas French Muslims had been represented, if at all, only by Dalil Boubakeur, the aging rector of Paris's Grand Mosque, and a group of state-vetted imams. (Within the government, he argued that this was really a way to monitor Islamist activity.) Boubakeur, as France's senior Muslim cleric, became the titular president of the new council. Not much later, he testified to the Stasi Commission on behalf of "school peace." (When I visited him at the mosque, he told me, "I see these girls in veils, I ask them, 'What do you know of Islam? Nothing? Not even the Islamic dates?' I say to them, 'Learn something about all this. Learn your religion before you go out and make a spectacle of yourselves in the streets.' ") But Boubakeur was not a neutral party. He owes his job to the government in Algiers, which supports the Grand Mosque and underwrites his salary. He is paid to be diplomatic and accommodating in Algeria's interests, and from the point of view of the Islamists—and not only the Islamists—that compromised whatever claim he had to authority over the Muslim community in France.

The real power in the new Muslim council was easily seized by a French-educated Islamist named Fouad Alaoui, the secretary-general of a large, well-financed fundamentalist group, the Union of French Islamic Organizations, which was planning to support the lawsuits of veiled schoolgirls. Alaoui called for a moratorium on defiance a few days after two French journalists—Georges Malbrunot, of *Le Figaro,* and Christian Chesnot, of Radio France—and their Syrian driver were kidnapped on the road to Falluja, on August 20th, by Islamists demanding the revocation of the veil law in exchange, presumably, for their lives. And he was much in the news in September, when he joined a delegation of French Muslim clerics sent to Iraq to try to free them. But there is not much doubt about Alaoui's agenda. "The French have always had a problem with religion—it's a reflex action," he told me when I visited him at his offices, above a La Courneuve mosque, off a long hall full of men waiting around,

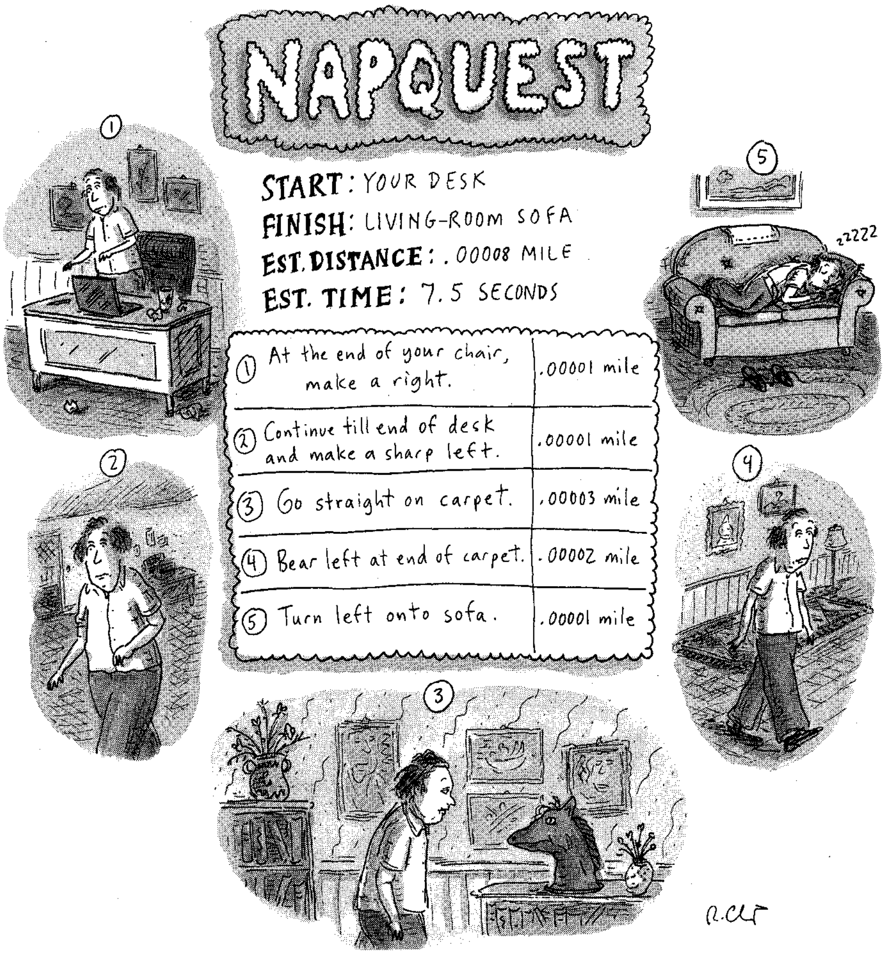


"There's the guy who deserves the credit for putting us back to work."

talking, and secretaries in long gray head scarves moving silently past them, taking orders and running errands, never smiling, their eyes trained on the ground. "And they have a huge problem with women. They think that their model of emancipation is *the* emancipation. But girls who want to stay in school, girls who want to be doctors—that's not the only model." Alaoui has followers all over France. He claims that a hundred thousand people came to the last yearly meeting of his Islamic union, in Le Bourget, and that both men and women had been invited to participate. But the women who did come were seated apart from the men, and most of them were enveloped in caftans and shawls.

Alaoui is not a particularly pleasant character. He is a French Moroccan with none of the grace or humor of a Moroccan host and most of the arrogance of a French bureaucrat. He had a list of grievances, some of them true, and some of them shared by other Frenchmen: Chirac, before putting together his commission with Bernard Stasi, had essentially cancelled funding for the part-time high-school jobs that thousands of students counted on for a small salary (true); the commission itself had called a hundred and sixty-nine witnesses, but "only ten or fifteen were against the veil law" (false). He neglected to mention that when one veiled woman was called to testify a man in her family whispered instructions in her ear, insulted the commissioners, and then accused them of harassment. And Alaoui had nothing at all to say on the subject of veil enthusiasts like the French-Tunisian writer Fawzia Zouari, who maintained, improbably, that the veil wasn't a sign of religious submission but an emblem of feminism, a way of saying "*Je m'en fou d'hommes!*" and "like Islamic architecture, a way you can see out but no one can see in." Or, you could say, the veil as a bad hair day. A month later, she insisted to me that there were no laws forcing women to veil in Iran, only "advisories."

There has been a good deal of discussion about the veil law among women who consider themselves to be strong French feminists. Ségolène Royal is a popular Socialist deputy and the new governor of Poitou-Charentes, and a refreshingly outspoken presence in the sniffy male sanctum of French politics. She has reservations about the new law, although she voted for it. She says she is more concerned about the effect of pornography on children than she is about scarves (which, to her mind, can be "very pretty . . . like the bonnets in Africa"). She told me, "Yes, I would say that the veil is a symbol of the oppression and segregation of women, but how do you resolve the problems of Muslim women in a society like this, where all the bus kiosks have advertising posters with naked women on them?" She worries about what will happen to those Muslim women if there is a blanket enforcement of sexual integration. But many feminists would argue that the Islamist obsession with covering up women's bodies is a deeper form of pornography than an obsession with uncovering them.


NAPQUEST
START: YOUR DESK
FINISH: LIVING-ROOM SOFA
EST. DISTANCE: .00008 MILE
EST. TIME: 7.5 SECONDS
① At the end of your chair, make a right. .00001 mile
② Continue till end of desk and make a sharp left. .00001 mile
③ Go straight on carpet. .00003 mile
④ Bear left at end of carpet. .00002 mile
⑤ Turn left onto sofa. .00001 mile
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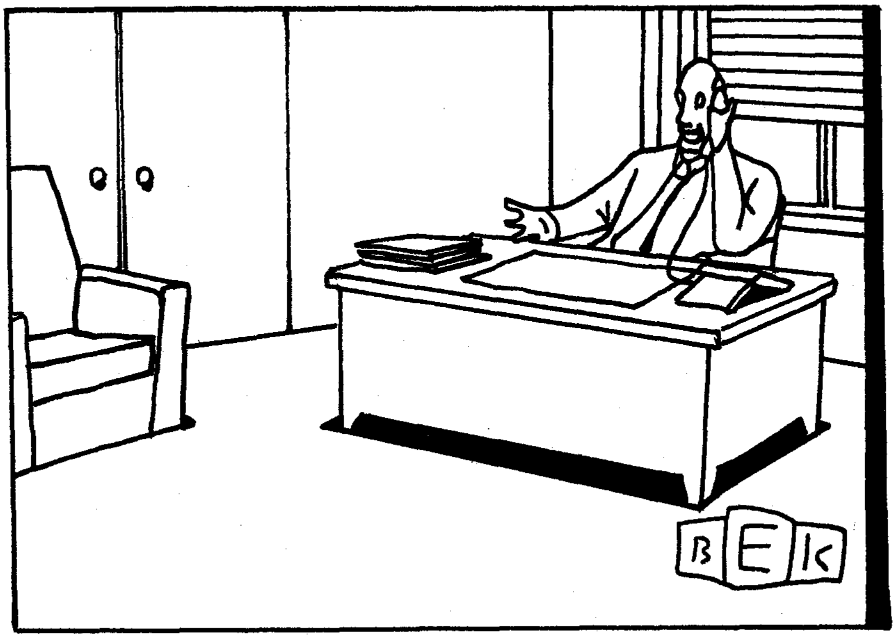
zzzz

Anne Hidalgo, the deputy mayor of Paris, whose portfolio includes women's rights (the French say "equality between men and women"), has no reservations about the law. She told me about some of the storefront prayer rooms she has helped open in immigrant neighborhoods—neighborhoods where Muslims had nowhere to pray but the sidewalks—and said that *she* worries about new preachers coming in and trying to undermine the law, and even preventing girls and women from taking part in mosque activities. She and the mayor, Bertrand Delanoë, are Socialists, though they have been much more inventive than most politicians in their party in making French Muslims feel welcome. They sponsor Friday lunches at high schools in Muslim neighborhoods, so the girls and their teachers can get together and talk things over. They throw a big party at city hall to celebrate the end of Ramadan each year. But they believe that head scarves in schools are only the beginning of Islamist demands for exceptional status within French law. (Hidalgo's friend Martine Aubry, the Socialist mayor of Lille, has stretched the law to meet Islamist sensibilities by closing municipal pools to men for several hours a week so that Muslim women can bathe alone.)

Hidalgo, who is the daughter of Spanish Republican immigrants, said, "We've been very perturbed about the veil. To see those very young girls veiled . . . The 'evolution' of the veil here isn't about choice, or religion. Perhaps the veil once said something religious, but now it's a sign of oppression. It isn't God, it's men who want it." Last year, Hidalgo had to suspend a Muslim woman who worked at city hall and was not only demanding to wear her Islamist robes and head scarves but refusing to shake hands with or even look at any of the men she was supposed to greet and help. "There are rules about public space," Hidalgo told me. "It was unthinkable that a person representing the collectivity go veiled."

On the other hand, Françoise Gaspard, a former Socialist deputy who is now France's representative for women's rights at the United Nations, came out publicly against the veil law, claiming that it would keep the daughters of Islamist families from getting to go to school at all, and they would end up "martyrs" to the Islamist cause. Her companion, the feminist writer Claude Servan-Schreiber, talks about visiting schools and being told by one Muslim girl after another: If you forbid the veil, my parents send me away to North Africa to be married off. (Those girls are much in demand among older men looking for access to French visas and work permits.) "It changed my mind completely," she said. "I decided we had to fight so that those girls were not excluded." Other feminists point to the alternatives. There are accredited correspondence courses. There is monitored homeschooling. There is the possibility of Muslim parochial schools—Lille now has one—which by meeting state education standards would be eligible for state support. Most feminists acknowledge that, whatever the law, there will always be some attrition in an education system. Gaspard shocked those feminists by militating against the veil law, especially because she had been the driving force behind a political parity law that went into effect in France in 2000. "I was very alone," Gaspard said, when I asked about the reaction, adding that France's own record on women's rights was hardly splendid, and that even the Jacobins of the French Revolution had outlawed pants on women. Other feminists reminded me that Frenchwomen couldn't open bank accounts or apply for passports until the late thirties, and couldn't even vote until 1945. For a long time in France, *le citoyen* meant mainly the rights of men.



"We're done—there's nothing left in the world to bastardize."

• •

The feminist philosopher Sylviane Agacinski, who wrote a book about parity and lobbied for it (she is married to Lionel Jospin, who was Prime Minister when the parity law passed), told me that, unlike Gaspard or Servan-Schreiber, she had become convinced that a veil law was necessary. "Today, clearly, the criteria of the rights of man are the rights of women," she told me. "The law was made to protect the bodies of girls, of minors. It's easy to be against it in retrospect, and to say that now those girls will be 'twice victims'—victims of Islam, victims of French exclusion. But the veil here isn't Islam, it's politics." One extremely exercised Muslim feminist had told the Stasi Commission that the parents of veiled schoolgirls deserved to be put in jail for child abuse, and Agacinski thinks that, however egregious arguments like that are, especially when no serious attempt has been made to integrate those parents, there is an argument to be made that the veil is as much a challenge to France's laws on human rights as it is to France's laws on secularism. She finds it a sad irony that, at a time when Muslim women are claiming, and winning, some of those rights in countries like Morocco—even in the face of a harsh Islamist revival—French Muslim women have been sacrificing theirs to archaic religious strictures. "All fundamentalisms pretend that religion is ahistoric, but religions evolve," she said. "Islamist boys today come to school in bluejeans." Agacinski counts as something of an expert on what people, in the name of religion, wear. She has been writing about veils—beginning with the Christian women who wore them for five hundred years, long before there were any Muslim women to put them on—and has spent the past four years reading Augustine, Tertullian, Paul, and all the other Christian fathers who demanded that women wear them, as a sign of their subordination to men. The wedding veil, of course, began as an oblation—a ritual offering of bride to husband. Today, not even most nuns, perpetual brides of Christ, wear them. In Germany, nuns are now forbidden to wear their wimples if they are teaching in a public school.

The veil, of course, is only one skirmish in the battle between Muslim practice and French law. There is the problem of divorce, consensual in France but, for some Muslims, simply a matter of a man repudiating a wife. There is the problem of polygamy, illegal in France but often, in older Muslim families, a social given. There are the welfare laws requiring the state to maintain poor households at acceptable French family standards—which, in the case of a Muslim polygamist, can mean four households, four wives, four sets of children. Then there is the problem of female genital mutilation. In France,

KISS MY BASS
Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Fords
I'M WITH STUPID
STILL CRAZY AFTER ALL THESE BEERS
GARTH BROOK
WORLD T
DIFFEE

THE CELEBRATED WITS OF THE RADISSON ROUND TABLE.

the *exciseuses*—women who traditionally remove the clitoris and labia from little girls—are illegal, but many still practice secretly. Most of their clients are African Muslims, and the operation has come to be incorporated into "acceptable" Islamist practice—which, of course, it's not. A feminist lawyer named Linda Weil-Curiel has argued more than thirty excision cases as a *partie civile* before the Cour d'Assises. And in the process she has managed to get the practice reclassified as a high crime, carrying a prison term for the *exciseuses* and often a damages penalty of thirty thousand dollars for the fathers—who invariably pay for the operation but whose liability had almost always been waived on their claim that excision was "women's business." (Genital mutilation used to be handled by local correctional courts.) Weil-Curiel began her crusade in the early eighties, after a baby girl bled to death from the operation because her father refused to call an ambulance for two days. The baby arrived at the hospital, Weil-Curiel said, without a drop of blood in her body. That was one of her first cases, though by no means the first death. Most genital mutilations go unreported; damaged children are rarely brought to hospitals unless they are quite sick. And Muslim women often suffer the same neglect, either because they are not brought to a hospital at all or are quickly removed from the hospital if no female doctors can see them. Alaoui had told me, "A patient has the right to refuse and choose her doctor. A hospital is a public service." Weil-Curiel said, "I'm for the veil law because it all starts there, it indicates a comportment. . . . And I'll take Chirac, with all his *casseroles*, because his position on that"—on the veil—"has been, well, noble. The women I see in court, the African women, were never veiled. They are now."

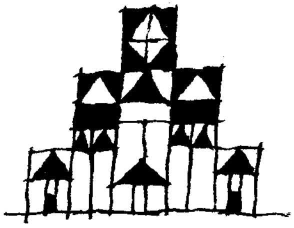
It's clear to anyone, after a certain amount of time in France, that the veil involves a much broader politics than French domestic politics. It has to do with the Middle East and the war in Iraq and the Palestinian intifada. People in France have come to regard the veil through the lens of their own response to conflicts having very little to do with schoolgirls. There have been at least three hundred attacks on Jews and Jewish property in France this year, many of them said to involve Muslims, and Chirac has had to walk a tightrope between Jewish fears and Muslim sensitivities. Some six hundred thousand French citizens are Jews—roughly one-tenth the Muslim population—and it is to Chirac's credit that there has been no "Jewish" position on the veil or, for that matter, on the Middle East, or on France's role in the Middle East. (Many prominent Jews have come out against the veil law *and* against the President's Iraq policy, most notably Bernard Kouchner, the founder of Médecins du Monde and today one of the country's most popular Socialists.) But the attacks on Jews have continued, to the extent that the Interior Ministry now calls this wave of anti-Semitism a threat to French society. And, in part because of the attacks, some Jewish boys and girls have begun reclaiming their "identity" with as much intensity as the Muslim schoolchildren, though arguably with less violence. If you go to the bottom of the Champs-Élysées—the Häagen-Dazs stop, kids call it—at noon on Saturday, when school gets out, you will sometimes see the boys from Betar, which is a kind of Jewish Defense League, and the Muslim boys from the *cités* squaring off on opposite sides of the avenue, shouting insults at each other and sometimes flinging themselves into a brawl in the middle of the punishing traffic. The Jewish boys are performing for the Jewish girls—known, in the argot of the day, as *chales*, or shawls—who stand on the Häagen-Dazs side of the street, licking their ice-cream cones and flaunting enormous designer scarves. The Muslim girls are not invited, but that, along with the sadly obvious poverty of most of the Muslim kids, is the only difference. The hatred is now the same.

Rémy Schwartz, the *conseiller d'état* who in effect ran Stasi's commission and oversaw its hearings, told me about the first veil hearings, in 1989. "There was one common thread," he said. "We were there to judge law, not souls. But this time I was reinforced in my conviction that a new law was necessary. The older laws were not applicable to the situation now. What we have now is part of a global politics of anti-Semitism, and it had to be limited." Schwartz reminded me that in six years the majority of citizens in Holland's four biggest cities will be Muslim, and even so there is still no common policy on secularism in Europe. There is not even a common policy on schools. (Germany, like France, wants the veil out of public schools, but, unlike France, permits religious education in those schools; Britain, where the majority of Muslim families are Pakistani, allows the veil as traditional dress.) Schwartz thought it was time for France, at least, to determine its own policy. My friend Tahar Ben Jelloun, the French-Moroccan writer, told me about being invited to speak at a Muslim public high school in Amsterdam—the Dutch, resolute multiculturalists, have opened thirty-two—and arriving to find that all the girls and teachers in the room were wrapped in scarves. "When I protested, one girl said to me, 'I've come back to God. Don't you believe in God?' I said, 'My beliefs are private.' " Ben Jelloun thinks that all those veils are really "a transfer of the Palestinian drama to the schools and the *cités*," where the Islamists can exploit a confusion of anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli sentiment that is by no means limited to teen-age children. He worries that those children will exhaust themselves in Islamic politics and that, if nothing changes, the exclusion they suffer now in France will only get worse.

Ghislaine Hudson, who sat on the Stasi Commission, is the principal of the Lycée Joliot-Curie, a few miles from both a large *cité* and a middle-class suburb, about an hour and a quarter from Paris. It is really two lycées—a vocational high school with eight hundred students, about half of them children of North African immigrants, and a classical lycée with eight hundred students, nearly all of them "French"—and she and her husband live in an apartment above the administrative offices. "This is a tough school," she told me, when I drove out to see her. It was an understatement. Last year, somebody tossed a homemade Molotov cocktail into the vocational dean's office in the middle of the night, destroying most of the building. (There was no arrest, and Hudson is glad about that.) Hudson was sleeping next door when the explosion came, but it left her, if anything, more determined to stay in a job that she finds at least as gratifying as her last one; she used to be headmistress at the Lycée Français, in Manhattan. Hudson is a beloved educator. Her teachers have presented her with a homemade *légion d'honneur* (she has a real one) commending her for her "contributions" to the cause of French education—yellow curtains in the reception room, flowers, plants, Christmas decorations, beds for teachers between apartments. It hangs in her office, along with a list of professors' birthdays and a big poster called "Intolerance," which is half black, half white, with a pair of scissors ripping through the middle. Her twin schools are like that poster. The students do not—she says will not—mix. Not at all. It was obvious when we walked through the two buildings, and even more obvious when a buildings inspector turned up for a surprise visit. The lycée students filed out, talking. The vocational students milled about in their corridor, sullen and even hostile, and some of the boys stood their ground when Hudson tried, smiling, to shoo them out. One gave her the finger and swore. She kept on smiling.

"The problem is I don't see a difference in France since I came home," she told me, back in her office. "Not in France, not in the police. These children are not integrated. I see the veil as more about social exclusion than about this revival of 'communities.' We've had veils, but our rule has been that once children come into the administration buildings and the schoolrooms—no veil. Occasionally, you bump into a girl who's kept it on. It's hard to convince her. She'll take it off, and there's a bandanna under it." Hudson voted for the veil law. "School, at least, should be free," she said. "The time you're in school should be free. Muslim girls should be given the choice to be free young women. And the law was aimed at protecting the minds of those girls."

In some ways, it protects more. For girls, the burden of choosing not to veil is gone, too, and with it the fear of punishment at home. ("We had this fear of our brothers," a French Muslim woman who fled Lille for New York at eighteen, once told me. "There were a lot of murders in my city.") For teachers and principals like Hudson, another burden is gone: the decision to say yes or no to a veiled girl is no longer in their hands. Hudson is pleased, though, that the law will come under review at the end of the school year—the Socialists' condition for supporting it—and be open to revision. She thinks that it needs review. She thinks that questions of what is or is not *ostensible* belong as much in the talks you have with students as in the middle of a statute. "We've always managed to solve the problem with dialogue, with talking," she told me, but she sounded uncertain, saying it. As it turned out, only about two hundred and fifty girls defied the veil ban after public schools opened in the fall (along with a handful of Sikh boys who arrived in turbans). And, at any rate, none of those girls came veiled to Joliot-Curie. For a while, Alaoui's moratorium on defiance held. By mid-October, after some seven hundred "dialogues," fewer than eighty girls were still arriving at school in head scarves. Sixty-two of them were spending their schooldays sitting alone in empty offices or unused classrooms. Nine had been expelled.



France's Islamists, faced with the kidnapping of French journalists by other Islamists, were clearly worried about reprisals, given the kidnappers' demand. Their moratorium was about that. But by late October, with the hostages still missing, the moratorium was over. Alaoui's Union of French Islamic Organizations had cancelled it, announcing that the country's Muslims would no longer be "blackmailed" into silence. The group took up where it had left off, urging schoolgirls to defy and sue. Guy Canivet, the president of the Cour de Cassation and, as such, France's senior jurist, had told me when the law was signed, "With the fixation on veils"—he meant on both sides—"we will not come out of this easily." He said that there were bound to be legal questions raised, questions of prejudgment—the prejudgment, say, that every scarf is a religious symbol—and that from the point of view of French law those questions were important. Most people expect that, one way or another, the veil will be back at the door to the classroom and the court. ♦

FICTION

MY HEART IS A SNAKE FARM

BY ALLAN GURGANUS

I had a snake farm in Florida. Well, Buck really owned it, but I believe I'm still Board Chairlady. Almost overnight, he hand-sculpted a one-stop two-hundred-reptile exhibit right across the road from me here. At first it was very clean. It drew lively crowds from the day it opened: December 24, 1959.

Then President Kennedy went and excited our nation about putting a man on the moon. That sicced the Future on any act just roadside and zoological. Tourists soon shot through our state, bound only for Cape Canaveral. Our Seminoles? Our bathing beauties? Passé at eighty m.p.h.

Buck's proved the last stand of pure unregulated carny spirit: back in '59, anybody with a placard, some Tarzan gimmick, and a big mouth could charge admission. And you'd pay. And later, even if feeling somewhat stretched and peppery, you'd still be glad you paid.

I myself had just retired from life as a grammar-school librarian. I was an unmarried woman of a certain age, imaginative as one could be on a fixed income. I'd felt a growing hatred of Ohio's ice, of shovelling the brick walk I knew would break my hip if I stayed another year. I was and am a virgin, my never-braced teeth too healthy. Toledo's secret nickname for me even as a girl: Little Threshing Machine.

My worst vice? Letting others *see* me gauge their foolishness. So claimed my lifelong housemate, Mother. Even so, fellow-librarians did make me a national officer, thanks to my way with a joke, my memory for names, my basic good sense. And because, at our dressy conventions, everyone looked better than I and they all knew I knew.

An old college friend urged Florida on me. "But, Esther? Be careful where you first settle. Danger is, once you're sprung from these fierce Toledo winters, the first place you find in the Sunshine State you will—like some windblown seed—take fast tropic-type root." She was a prophet. I drove past Tallahassee and, eager to make good time, got only as far as a crumbling pink U.S. 301 motel called Los Parnassus Palms. "Somebody's thinking," I said, hitting the brakes of my blue Dodge. Been here ever since. Rented a room by the night, week, then year, and wound up buying the whole place for less than my Toledo town house cost. I still keep the towels fresh in all twelve suites.

LOU BROOKS

A previous owner had named (then plaqued) each luxury efficiency: "The Monterey," "The Bellagio," etc. True, I never knew what such titles meant. But I accepted them as part of History's welcome by-product, Romance. Some suites I lined with library shelves, others served recreation needs. E.g., 206-B, "The Segovia": *Periodicals, Ping-Pong, Reference.*

I didn't care to chat up strangers nor wash the sheets of hairy men. So I switched off my place's wraparound neon. But a motel cliff-hangs its highway the way waterfront property has lake. Salesmen kept honking, believing that dead signage (plus one cute wink) might mean a discount.

Now, to me, Virginity and Refrigeration have both always seemed blue. Ditto one small steady "NO" burning before a too pink and ever-blinking "VACANCY." So, ten days into ownership, royally sick of explaining myself, I flipped on that blue "NO" full time. Redundant, you say? With me age sixty-seven or eight? Well, let's get this part over:

As to sex, I had one chance once with a beautiful boy but I chose not to. Actually, it was the father of a friend but it seemed wrong in their sedan in the countryside, and I thought there would be other takers. There were not. You can wind up with nothing; but, if you claim that and don't apologize and forever tell it straight, it can become, in time, something. It's not for everybody to marry and have kids, or even to be homosexual. Or even to be sexual. But you can still retire and move to the semitropics and wind up on the board of a Serpentarium. You never know—that's the thing. And I say, thank God.

Except for two middling hurricanes, my first year in Florida proved ever quieter. I'd always said I liked my own company; well, now I had twelve cubic suites' worth. In identical bathroom mirrors, I found one tusky similarity saying, "Esther, you again?" True, the most intellectual Baptist ladies hereabouts invited me to join a Serious Issues book club; yes, I re-linoleumed my whole second story; by then it was almost 1960.

The previous October, Mother'd finally ceased ringing her favorite little bedside bell. I had put it there for emergencies, but soon a moth in the room, any passing car, warranted much brass. By the end, I asked the morticians if they would please place Mother's service bell right in the coffin with her. These large, kind men remembered me lording it benign over their grammar-school library. They now said, "How sentimental. So your mama, in case she wants something, can ring for someone else in the next world?" I lowered my eyes. "Exactly," I said, but thought, *And ring, and ring.* I let gents believe whatever version of me they found easiest to take.

Now I'd retired to wearing flats, finally becoming my own silent hobby, imagine my alarm when the two acres right across my highway here blossomed into Carnival overnight. Someone had leased that swampy inlet and its entire adjoining beachfront. He'd claimed my sole view of the ocean. One morning, two black Cadillacs, sharky with finnage, rolled up, pulling silver-bullet Airstream trailers. A pile driver soon pounded what looked like sawed-off telephone poles right into pallid sand dunes.

The man in charge, I saw from my perch, was a big tanned white-haired fellow, all shoulders and department-store safari gear. He supervised via barks and backslaps, using his beer bottle as a pointer. I always resist such show-off males. (They never notice.) I served under three similar swaggering principals, mere boys. Any Ohio man willing to be called "third-grade teacher" for a few years got promoted above capable senior women. Now I watched this particular bull, six-two, fifty-eight if a day. Dentures probably.

Across the poles, he hand-stretched huge canvas placards pulled tight as fitted sheets. Each showed a different Wild Animal of the creeping, crawling, biting variety. The ocean? Already upstaged. (First a showman hides something, then he describes it so you'll shell out the admission.) Braggart images looked wet with all the drippage colors of tattoos. Crocodiles were shown big as green Chevies. Black snakes glistened in figure-eight oil spills that then lashed up the legs of screaming white girls scarcely dressed. The more pictures this hatchet-faced lion tamer rigged aloft, the slower flowed traffic on old U.S. 301. Beasts scaly, beasts spiny, swarthy, twisted, fanged. "Come one, come all." Not wholly uninteresting.

Meantime, I dragged a cushioned bamboo lounger out of "The Santa Anna." Arms crossed, jaw set, I settled in, daring him to get one centimetre tackier.

The salt-white dunes soon swarmed with antlike workers. Into sand, using driftwood, the head honcho drew a large scallop shell, outhouse-size. He pointed where he wanted it built. Bricklayers scratched their heads then shrugged but, laughing, nodded. Many cinder blocks got unloaded. Within hours, the men had formed three steps, each mitred round as a fish gill in "Fantasia." Atop these stairs arose one little Aztec ruin dropped beside the sea—a ticket booth, glass-fronted, scallop-crowned.

As masons mosaicked, Jungle Jim praised his artistes, fed them grilled sandwiches, tried their trowels while squinting past his cigarette. His big piñata head moved side to side, judging, as he framed all this beauty between his thumbs. He once backed too near traffic.

Three attractive young women, using hand fans, kept their folding chairs aimed wherever he largely stood. By six o'clock, his cinder-block fortress, shaped like some goldfish bowl's hollow castle, had been painted an odd pistachio-meets-swimming-pool green.

All day, hands on hips, making a jolly silhouette, the man laughed and threw his head back sort of thing. He seemed as entertained as I by how his fantasy could rise in hours from sketch to housing. Come ruddy sunset, these circus folk threw tapering shadows that spanned traffic, just hooking their heads and shoulders into my parking lot. The showman (roughly my age, I now decided, though some men carry it better) mixed two clear pitchers of Martinis. He and his workers toasted their structure and everyone watched the sun sink pinky-gold behind it. Then the boss—with a bullfighter's slash—tossed his whole Martini up the stairs, cocktail glass shattering into sand. His women, stirred, saluted him by knocking back their drinks in single gulps. Thus ended their first day here.

If such a white-trash eyesore had sprung up across the street from my Toledo mews town house, I would've swarmed City Hall with two hundred other irate owner/career girls. But here, even seeing my oceanfront eclipsing fast, I squinted from my greenhouse (formerly 202-A) while pretending to read Fiction (206-C), doubting that things could grow more Gypsy-ish.

The level of construction across four lanes of traffic soon became almost too complex for even me to track. Then two huge snakes arrived U.P.S. How could I know the bundle contents from this distance without using Mother's surprisingly helpful mother-of-pearl opera glasses? Hints: serpent-package length, two added suitcase handles, triangular orange Caution stickers, air-holes thickly screened, and how the delivery boy, wearing shorts, held these out like barbells, far, far from his plump legs.

The carnival's first six days here, I played hard to get. I deprived management of my company. I did not even wave. They seemed to be coping all too well.

Nothing like this had ever so directly threatened my privacy tropique, my sense of self. Of course, the previous year, our retired librarians' newsletter, *Ex Libris*, had announced, "Guess which colorful national officer just retired to and purchased her own 'compleat' Florida motel? (As yet unlisted, she is 823-887-9275.) Yes, our darn Esther!" Librarians fetched up here so thick I thought of it as filing. I stuck the Altoona crowd in 104-A, "La Sangria." The louder Texans I sent on purpose to the leaking 307-B, "The Santa Anna," as an Alamo pun that only I got. Eventually, I hung sheets over my office door and windows. And, slowly, even those big-time lending librarians greediest to borrow a free sunny room got the hint. Circulation dwindled.

Alone I was again. Mother's bell had been muted by six feet of Ohio loam long since frozen solid. My studying the ocean? Worth maybe three full minutes daily. Now what?

The ringmaster across my highway finished digging a whole lake using his yellow rental bulldozer. From floor two and then from my flat roof, I caught chance peeks at his radical new land use behind the screening placards. Finally, one afternoon as I sat reading, all at once, in the bull's-eye center of the lake he'd scooped, up spouted a wild central jet. It went off like Moby-Dick sighing straight aloft. This secret fountain caught me utterly off guard. I felt surprised, then half scared by such a tacky surge, felt something possibly akin to sheer dumb joy. A column of white foam shot forty feet, then fell heavily aside to make a plash, half violent, half joke. My every suite felt cooled some eight to ten degrees.

I rose. I saw that I had been a snob. These dark, pretty circus folk were new here and living so en masse—and God knows I was none of the above.

At last I understood it'd been Mother, that old eighty-five-pound Denver boot, still holding me back—her scoldings about manners and the standards required of a family fine as ours. She'd never let me play with my favorites, twins, "coarse, grocer's daughters." Having risen, I now slammed shut my third time through Pearl S. Buck's "Good Earth." Why be trapped in the past as some Chinese peasant girl when I had Maturity's sloppy, festive here-and-now?

Darting downstairs to my office-kitchen, I pulled forth a fresh-baked piping coffee cake, carried it bold across the highway (as soon as the steady stream of Key-bound tourists allowed a gap for a running gal my age). That's how I first met Buck and his wives.

"Well, aren't you the perfect welcome wagon," he himself spoke, deep. "We noticed you seemed to be in every window. Sure you ain't triplets? Does your coming over mean you forgive a guy's menagerie for complicating your property value? But aren't you scared my prize Burmese python will wind up in your"—he squinted at the unlit neon—"Parnassus Palms dresser drawers?"

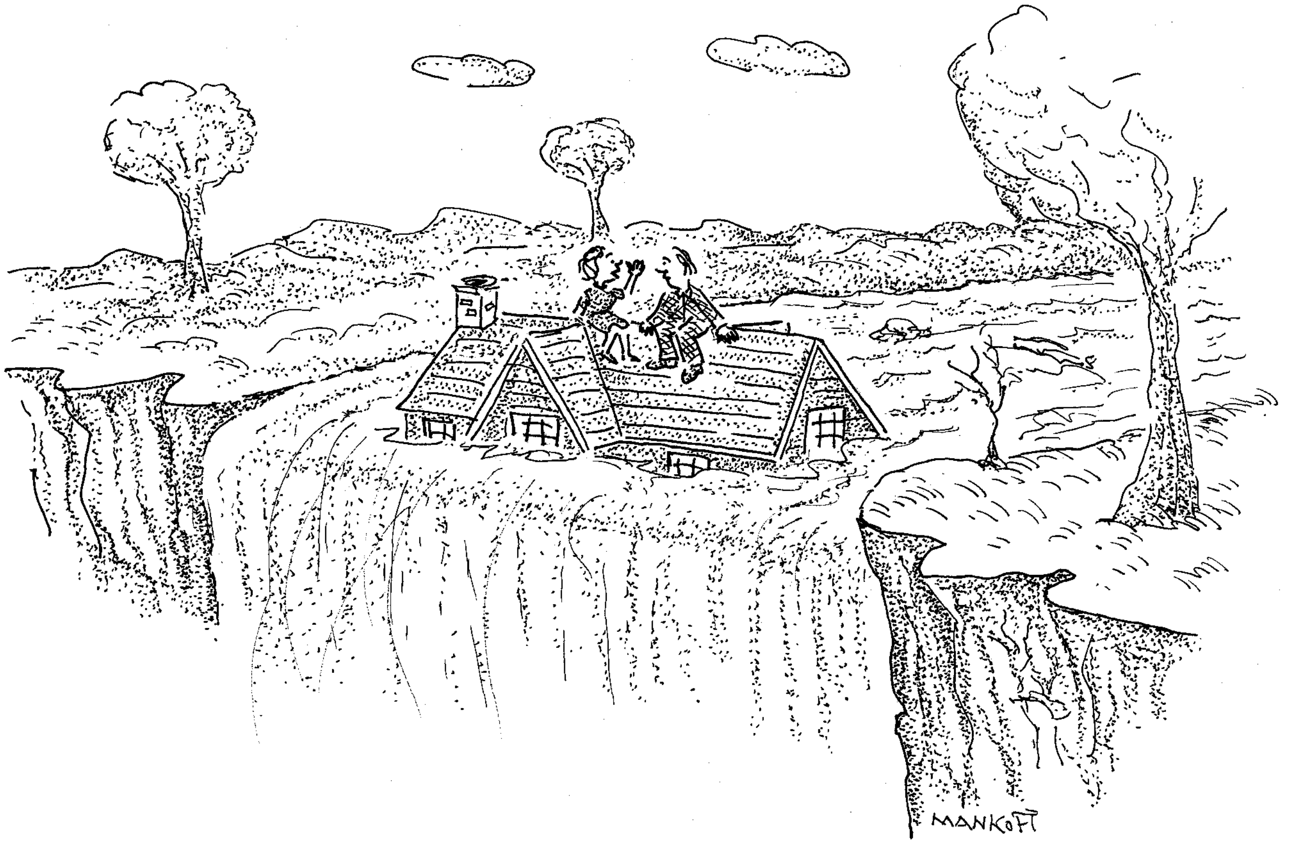
"That a threat or a promise, sir?"

Well, this cracked him up. "You're a right good sport."

"Looking like this, do I have a choice?" The ladies laughed, he didn't. I am such a patented virgin I can say things only some ancient cross-eyed nun might risk.

"Everybody has a choice." Buck met me head on. "That's what we mean by 'sport.'"

Soon, over a berry-pink Daiquiri in a teak-lined trailer, I asked Mr. Buck how many snakes he owned—did he



"You and your 'Go with the flow.' "

• •

hire them from some animal-theatre agent or catch his by hand? The man's voice had gathered accents from pretty much everywhere. These were basted in a unifying baritone the hue of Myers's dark rum.

"Some, lady, I did personally snag in Brazil. The gators seem to find me. Mowgli, she swam up a service-station drainage ditch in Kissimmee. I rescued Stumpy after he fell in some bad motel's pool, no offense. My gators start, like seeds, small, but you feed them into becoming attractions. Funny, but they're loyal in their way. The fancier snakes I have been known to order by phone but will probably *say* I caught bare-handed. I *did*, by dialling Princeton, New Jersey, same outfit that pervides mice to your finer cancer labs. Yep, always have been fascinated by the cold-blooded. As a kid, I tanned muskrat and otter pelts, kept corn snakes as pets, pretty, nonpoisonous. Been on my own since I was nine. Lost Mom to diphtheria, Dad to a travelling lady preacher. So be it. A longish adventure.—But enough 'bout me. What's your setup, Esther? You didn't start in Florida. Naw, you're like me. On the lam from another buncha lives squandered elsewheres, eh?"

I lowered my eyes, unwilling to seem simple as the word "unopened." But then Buck did something unheard of. Awaiting response, he looked right at me. I peeked back up. I stood here and he stood there, with his ladies slouched on all sides, and he did not avert his eyes or flinch, not even men's usual once. "Ouch at first sight," I call it. My teeth are independent; each has its own unique sense of direction. And my hair, despite backcombing, has grown somewhat thin on top. All my life, even when I was six, males have treated me like The Maiden Aunt. A self-fulfilling trend. But this Buck, he stared straight at (not through) me. Seemed only he was strong enough to take it.

Buck soon bounded clear across north- and southbound lanes, inviting me to his show, for free. He'd asked everybody door-to-door for miles, be they massage parlors or churches. His toylike bulldozer had by now piled real hills around Buck's spitting lake. He'd imported full-grown royal palms. He made the white gravel paths look almost natural, going nowhere, if fast and in four-leaf clovers.

Pastors, bleach-blond masseuses, two education-minded Negro couples, and a bunch of mean little boys gathered, plus me. "Everybody 'bout ready? Come one, come all, then. Price is right, if today only." Then he performed his entire test spiel. Buck's first jokes did seem stale, even for 1959 ("Welcome to Florida, Land of Palms . . . all open!"). But it was like a starter try for us all. If he tended to ramble, en route Buck charmed, too. He mapped out Amazon rainy seasons, warned of visa requirements, described his sleeping-sickness onsets. He showed early claw damage to one forearm. Facing certain snakes, he recounted their especially nasty captures. As he grew loud, his creatures got stiller and even beadier-eyed, as if out of guilt. He draped any creature not gator-weighty around his neck. Like leis that flexed, they seemed to like it.

When Buck laughed, he gave off a

smell like flint, ham, and 3-In-1 motor oil. Active as he was, one of his fingernails was always black-blue, coming and going. He lived in his great-white-hunter gear, jagged khaki collar, epaulets. Pall Malls got buttoned into a customized slot, the Zippo slid snug into its own next door. This man had a brown face like a very good Italian valise left out in a forest during World War Two and just refound. Weathered, but you could still see how fine its starter materials had been.

Oh, he had some pips in there.

Alligators, about forty, and three were the stars—huge, I mean as big as ever I saw in Mother's precious back numbers of the *Geographic.* As with cows, they had whole *sides* to them. They loved their new lake; they showered in its hourly fountain. Huge amounts of lettuce were eaten. (Buck had already payolaed the produce clerks from Piggly Wiggly and Winn-Dixie to bring their castoffs here instead of leaving them lonely in trash vats back of stores. He also fed his reptiles frozen chickens—claimed the birds' iciness made a crunch the beasts considered their own achievement.)

I soon noticed grocery trucks over there at all hours, as much for curiosity as delivery. TV stations covered his Grand Opening. By now, the show was charging full admission and Buck let each visiting child feed one gator apiece. The kid would inch out on a diving board wearing rubber gloves to keep from getting lettuce drool on his little paws. Parents took snapshots. I feared a lethal topple. I briefly wondered about the Reptile Farm's insurance picture; then, suspecting no coverage whatever, thought of something else. Smelling chow, gators hissed like gas leaks. Large white mouths opened, a fleet of Studebaker hoods. Seemed it was always time to feed the gators. Loose luncheon meats, crates of limes, you name it—they ate everything.

Before Buck and his wives appeared, my afternoons had been somewhat less eventful: the local library (open 3-5 Tuesday afternoons) featured only past-due best-sellers stinking of Coppertone. Come 1 P.M., I had been mostly monogamous with my favorite soap, "The Secret Storm." Sure, Fridays I might go wild, pop popcorn. But, finally, in the Parnassus Convent vs. Reptile Coliseum battle? No contest. By then Buck had made me a charter member of the Snake Farm Family Board, meaning I got in free.

His one request: "How's about you arrive five minutes prior to showtime wearing a flowered hat and carrying a purse, Esther? Just to keep up our sense of how my place is classy, scientific, er, whatever. Pretending to listen like you do gives my talks real tone, your being the retired educator. Eyeglasses would be good, even your reading specs. Hell, hon, with intellect and class like yours on view, I can charge a dollar more per customer."

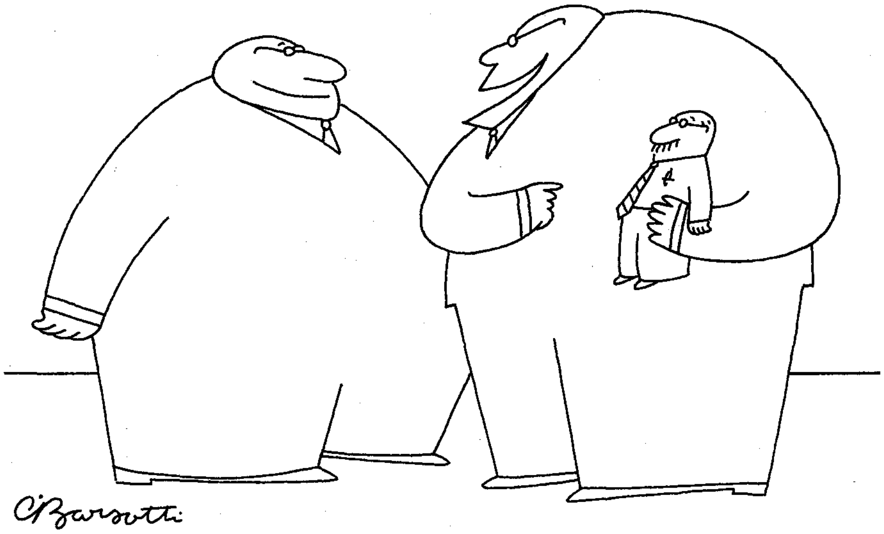
Oh, he was sly, that Buck. He wore a cap pistol rammed into his holster, had on thigh-high treated boots, double-thick to keep the rattlers from snagging clear through. He would be wading into their humid glass booth, where thirty rattlesnakes curled clicking like seedpods on a binge.

Nobody hates snakes more than snakes do. That's part of why we fear them. We recognize our own self-loathing, but slung even lower, so it's armless-legless with self-pity. And yet, even during a heat wave, snakes piled one atop the other like trying to form some sloppy basket. I did not get why. Myself being a single person, myself with typing margins set Maximum Wide, with me needing 13,500 sq. ft. just to feel sufficiently dressed, simply watching such constant summer skin contact made me feel half ill.

Sometimes if I saw a crowd of cars I might wander over. First I limited myself to Mondays and Wednesdays—plus, of course, weekends. (Mother had always rationed my attending other children's birthday parties: "You come home a sticky blue from their cheap store-bought sheet cakes. You forgive their whispering jokes about your . . . features. Listen to you, still wheezing from having run around screaming till you sound asthmatic, Esther. —No, we're alike. Too sensitive for groups. You are one overstimulated young lady. So let's just sit here a few hours and collect ourselves, shall we, Little Miss?")

Buck's wives swore that if I stayed away too long certain snakes sulked. How could the ladies tell? You mostly recognized different reptiles by their size and how much of that the others had chewed off. I got to know on sight Buck's largest rattlers: Mingo, Kong, and Lothar. Stumpy was the hungriest gator and often got in the way of others' frozen chickens. Stumps never learned. And he paid dearly with his limbs, his tail mass, and, finally, his life. God bless his stubborn appetite.

After hours, hanging out with wives in the Reptile Postcard Shop & Snack Canteen, Buck claimed he had once bought Hemingway a rum drink in Key West and got invited home to "Papa's" hacienda for an all-night poker game. I usually asked him what Hemingway was really like. Buck would shake his head sideways: "Good talker. Sore loser."



"Forty years' loyal service—I'm taking him to lunch."

During tours, I don’t think Buck’s grasp of Latin was all it might have been. More than once I heard some pushy customer loiter before a ragged cage, jab his camera toward Exhibit A, and demand, “Hey, what kind of snake is this ’un here?” “That one? That’s a big mean red one is what that is. Sooner bite you than look at you. Now, ahead on our left . . .” People would laugh, not knowing if he was joking or mule-headed. But, with this level of poison around, considering his German Luger and hooked stick, no one ever did ask Buck for refunds, repetitions, or corrections.

After one show, I quizzed him: “I guess it’s that people love to be scared?”

“No, dear Esther. It’s: people love to be scared by something *new*.”

I looked at him, I sipped straight bourbon.

Buck had been married four times, and three-quarters of his troubles were still with him. “Buck’s harem,” locals soon called it. Each gal kept her sleek identical trailer parked behind the backmost palms. I heard tell Buck visited a different lady every night. I’d never stayed up late enough to see. Some part of me did wish he would come nap anytime in any of Parnassus’s comfy settings. I kept the central fans of all twelve suites going, just in case. He plainly had no sleeping place not already warmed by a previous nesting wife. “Feeding them’s cheaper ’n alimony,” one local boy claimed Buck said. But that sounds like any of the hundred rumors that made his stint here on our highway so lively during those glory years of latest Ike-Mamie, earliest Jack-Jackie.

Buck’s wives seemed another sort of specimen collection. They wore stage makeup, as if competing with each other during those long hot afternoons spent waiting for Buck’s last show to end. Of all ages, his gals were either very young now or had been even better-looking pretty recently. Each still appeared sun-baked with strong ceramic traces of her starter glamour.

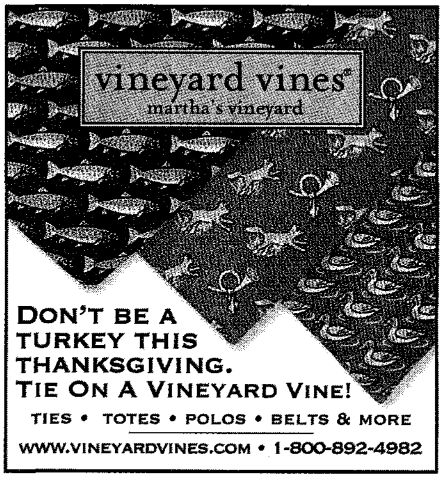
Working the concession trailer, they were supposed to sell the tourists food and souvenirs; they mostly drank small Cokes and ate the merchandise. They said funny if cutting things about the paying customers. “With those ears, we should stick ole Clem there out in the monkey cage,” or “Some of our exhibits eat their young, ma’am, and if you can’t quiet those bawling twins of yours we have the livestock that will.” “Now, ladies,” Buck came in laughing. “Ladies, m’ ladies,” shaking his head. He liked them spirited. Of my outfits, he preferred me in the lilac-covered hat and the white patent-leather shoes with matching bag. He wanted his wives to lounge out front in halters, waving at the cars, bringing in considerable business. (Me, I’d drag a kitchen chair into shade off to one side.) Truth is, the girls looked a little better from sixty-five m.p.h. But don’t we all?

Come drink time, the former wives changed into beautifully ironed off-the-shoulder Gypsy blouses. They sported pounds of Navajo silver and turquoise squash-blossom necklaces that would bring a fortune today. They were always painting their fingernails and toenails or working on each other’s. You felt their tensions crest only at the sound of the final blanks Buck fired to end his show. When at last he stalked in, there’d be this pinball ricochet of love-starved looking: him gaping at the nut-brown breasts of one while another studied Buck’s flat backside, as those other two gals kept glowering at each other’s fronts. Nervous, I once blurted, “Cold Coke, anybody?” and got one hot glare so unified.

His exes were intelligent girls who had not enjoyed my educational advantages. They’d once felt too attractive ever to need those. Doing crosswords out loud between shows, they’d squeal at how I helped. “Flanders Field!” I found myself yelling as my mother told me not to at parties. “Cordell Hull!” The girls soon treated me like Einstein’s sister, and I admit I humored them; I let them.

Christmas and Easter, I had the whole crew over to Los Parnassus Palms for my turkey, dressing, pies. The wives arrived in drop earrings, evening gowns. Slinky and powdered, they unfolded from matching Caddies. Buck would wear a crumpled tux that looked like Errol Flynn at the end.

Beloved fellow snake farmers seemed most impressed by my owning countless solid-silver napkin rings from Mother. (Funds she might’ve spent on her only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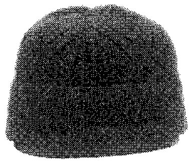
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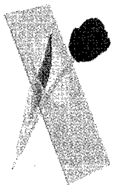
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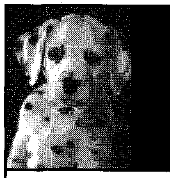
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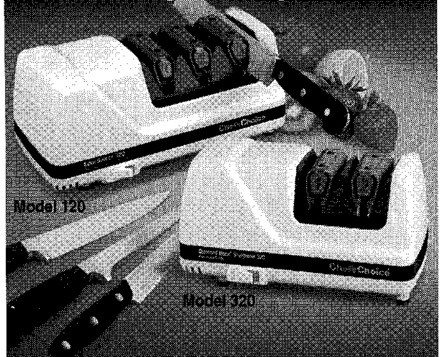

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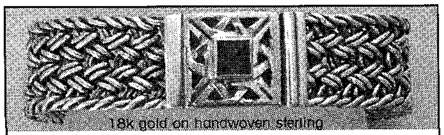

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child's teeth braces.) "Good weight," Buck said, testing, as all his holiday ladies nodded, giving him hooded looks. His wives had each been in or near the Show Business. Buck's first, Dixie, once worked as a juggler's assistant in Reno; Peggy, numero dos, claimed to have been a buyer (estate jewelry) for Neiman Marcus; Tanya was runner-up to be a studio player at Metro pictures in the class that included Janet Leigh. Over wine, they revealed more of Hollywood's sad secrets. Hearing the crazy vices of the stars, I cried, "No. Not him, too! What leading man'll be *left* for Esther?"

(Later, some local yahoo tried telling me Buck had never married those three girls, said that they were just part of his roadside attraction, that their separate trailers made nightly cash admissions possible. I don't believe it for an instant and I think some people on this road have very dirty minds. They adored him. That was all.)

Not long into Kennedy's Administration, the wives sped off to Bradenton to buy new outfits. That's where the carnies all retire, patronizing a glamour shop the girls'd heard about. I saw their Cadillac scratch off around three, and at four I notice Buck, waving a big white hanky to make cars stop, looking sick as he comes staggering across four lanes of traffic toward my Parnassus Palms. I can't say I hadn't pictured this house call before. But not in crisis, not owing to illness. When I opened my screen door, he frowned, head wedged against one shoulder, and his face was all but black. He handed me a razor blade. "Esther? Either Kong or Lothar snagged me a good one in the back. Here, cut an X. Then pour ammonia on it. Go in an inch at least. I can't see to reach it and my focus... It's already all over, focus sliding, Esther."

He whipped off his shirt. Face down, he fell across my rattan lounger. I now stood behind him. Two fang marks weren't hard to find because of all the purple swelling. "O.K.," I said. I dashed to get a towel and the ammonia. I splashed cold water in my face. Buck's upper back was seizing something terrible. And yet its shape was very strong, copper-brown, tapered like a swimmer's. I cut far deeper than I wanted, then blotted at least two pints into a large white beach towel. "Now," Buck said, "I'm going to have to ask you, Esther. And for a friend like you I'd do it in a heartbeat. Feels I... feels I'm going into shock here. I'd never ask for any reason shy of Life and Death.—But, honey, would you suck it?"

I might sound funny if I tell you my thin legs nearly buckled. I fought then not to faint. Blame my seeing his dark blood or my viewing his entire back. More than once I had pictured him across the road there being worked on by his full swarm of wives. I'd imagined how Buck might look shirtless, and he looked better, even with blood, which made this more a movie. With Buck in the lounger, I could not bend forward far enough to help. "Here." I lifted him and led him to my davenport. He was only half conscious and the weight of him was wonderful and tested my full sudden Esther strength. I helped him stretch out there, face down. God, how he trusted me!

I settled on the floor beside his ribs. Finally, breathing for two, I rose up on my knees. My teeth are bucked, as you'll have noticed. My own low-cost form of fixing them has always been to make a joke before others get the chance. "Need a human bottle opener?" I once heard a handsome young man quip to pals (and me only seven, trailing embarrassed pretty girlfriends). But now, knowing I might finally be useful to someone, I managed to say nothing. No Esther jokes today, Esther!

I tottered on my knees, then pulled the hair back off my forehead. My eyes wet, I drew closer to his snake holes. They were like twin tears in cloth. At last I pressed my lips down onto those warm slots black with blood, then, slow, I pulled the poison out of Buck. Into myself. You might think I'm exaggerating when I say that I could taste what was poison, what was blood. The poison was bitter with a foamy peroxide kick to it. But blood seemed only salty and, by contrast to the venom, almost sweet.

"Spit it out, Esther, spit it on the towel. Get all that out of you. I cannot have you harmed, not for a sec. You're so fine, dear. Bless your soul for this." I did as he said. I spewed it out then, just as he told me. I was stooped here over him, him flexed out below me, star-shaped, Buck. I fought wanting to cry like some little girl would then. Crying not from horror, not even from gratitude, but more from simply knowing: *This is my life that I am living.*

"Esther, please hit me with ammonia. Takes acid to counteract snake acid. There. Yeeks, burns so good. Now I'm going to need some shut-eye, pet. You sure did it, though. You got it all or most, and I can tell, dear. But let me sleep, oh, twenty minutes tops. Then I'll be fine. No more than that or I'll get dopey. I will need to do something when I come to. Need to have you walk me around. This has happened maybe ten other times, so I know. But when I do feel stronger and can roll over, I am going to thank you, Esther. Living across from us these couple years, you've made our being here just so much livelier. More civil. And now this. You be thinking if there is anything whatever I can do for you, girl."

Then, at once, he passed out or slept. I eased onto my "Alhambra" breezeway. Had myself a cigarette. I'd only ever smoked two before. But somebody had left half a pack in "Segovia" and I did enjoy that one slow Lucky, pulling smoke way in, letting it find its own eventual way out. Laissez-faire. Then I realized: here, the only time a man had ever told me in advance I could expect something memorable and I was making my big mouth smell like an ashtray. I had to laugh at myself as I dodged into "Bellagio," 109-A, and swigged down half a bottle of Lavoris. By doing this, I saw I'd made most of a decision.

I only waked him because I felt scared that being out too long might give Buck brain damage or such. I stooped beside my davenport again. "Time," I said. Facing downward, he just yawned, then aimed his elbows out, as if nothing much had happened. So . . . male.

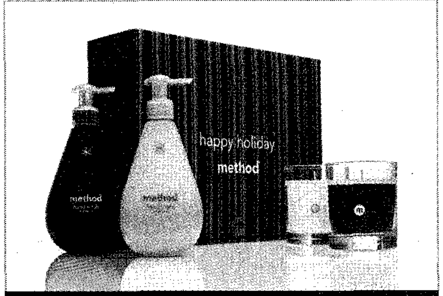
My couch had a new hibiscus print on it, maroon. Whatever blood he shed, it would blend in. But I wished that some might stay there, permanent. So sure, he turned over with a sleepy grin and growled up, "Hiya, lifesaver." First Buck kissed me full on the mouth then more *in* the mouth. It did not prove so repulsive as it always looked when you suspected two movie actors were sneaking doing it.

Then he told me he'd forever been crazy about me after his fashion and right from the start. Said how his liking me so, it had nothing to do with my First Aid just now. Not simple tit for tat. "So to speak," I said, with the valor of an ugly person trying to make light of everything so as to stay hid.

He told me to go pull the blinds shut, and I did. He got himself to sitting, woozy still. Then he patted the cushion right beside him. I, dutiful, feeling frail as if *I* had been snakebitten, settled just where he showed me.

"You won't forever after blame me or be jealous of the others if we do this once, to celebrate my coming back to life with your great help, right?" I shook my head no. He said, "Nothing to panic anybody. No breakage, Esther. Just one thing I want to do. I am too weak for offering up everything right now. I would black out. But this I know I want." And he slid down off the couch and, first, Buck warmed his right hand between my knees. I wore half-stockings and he soon rolled those down with all the care of the earth's best young doctor. Next, he hooked his hands around my drawers' elastic and pulled the pants out from under me, showing me how to lift up so he could do it easy.

He knew I could not have borne to let him see me all undressed. It was just too late for that much. Too late to do everything. But as I kept my hand on his one shoulder not swollen, Buck's white hair, bristly as a pony's, disappeared under my housedress. There was no false start, none of the snaky seeking I had feared. His tongue was there all at once, its own bloodhound locator system, and it could have been a hundred and sixty degrees hot. I had no idea. It, his tongue, soon seemed to be a teacher of infinite patience, then like a sizzling skillet, a little pen flashlight, now featherweight, now flapjack, then just a single birthday candle that—in time, strengthened by doing lap after lap—becomes the forest fire. I had no notion I would ever respond like this, way below where Language ever even gets to start. In brief, certain sounds were made. Snake-farmish sounds, only it was me . . . I. The "I" that soon had her leg crooked around his shoulder, pushing him away, but he leaned into that so it felt like I was playing him in and out of me at exactly my own speed. He was regular as a clock and I was always knowing where he would have been as I allowed myself and just went off again and again and off again, my



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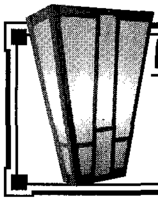
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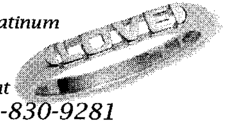

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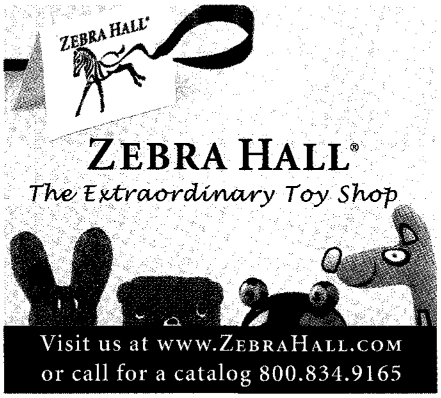

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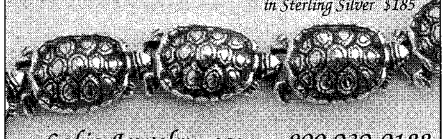

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calves St. Vitus, my feet dancing spasms. The first time was sort of a sea green, the second time more a bronzy blue—there came a red moment but it ended all steamed in hard-baked stone-washed sunflower yellow.

It ended only because I was too proud to let it go on as long as it wanted to. Which would've been as long as both my life and his. Finally, I said, "There, oh my . . ." and started to make one of my jokes, but my dignity stopped me. Funny, I didn't feel ashamed. I felt dignified. I never understood that this was possible. Having another person here, it was less shaming. It was more a way of knowing we are all alike in this. It was beautiful. It was once but it was beautiful.

"Bacon and scrambled eggs and coffee cake," I chanted, gathering myself to stand. I knew I wouldn't risk the ugly comedy of pulling up my stockings or regaining my step-ins. Instead I would eat a meal with a man who had just taken my knickers off and he would know that, while we ate. I'd placed new oilcloth on my little table here in the former Main Office of Los Parnassus and I felt glad the room looked nice. He stayed right on till seven-thirty-six. I asked if he wanted my help to get him back across the highway. "No," he smiled. "Let me picture you right here as you are, girl. You're a saint from Heaven and a wonderful, wonderful woman. You're so strong. I love that in you, Esther."

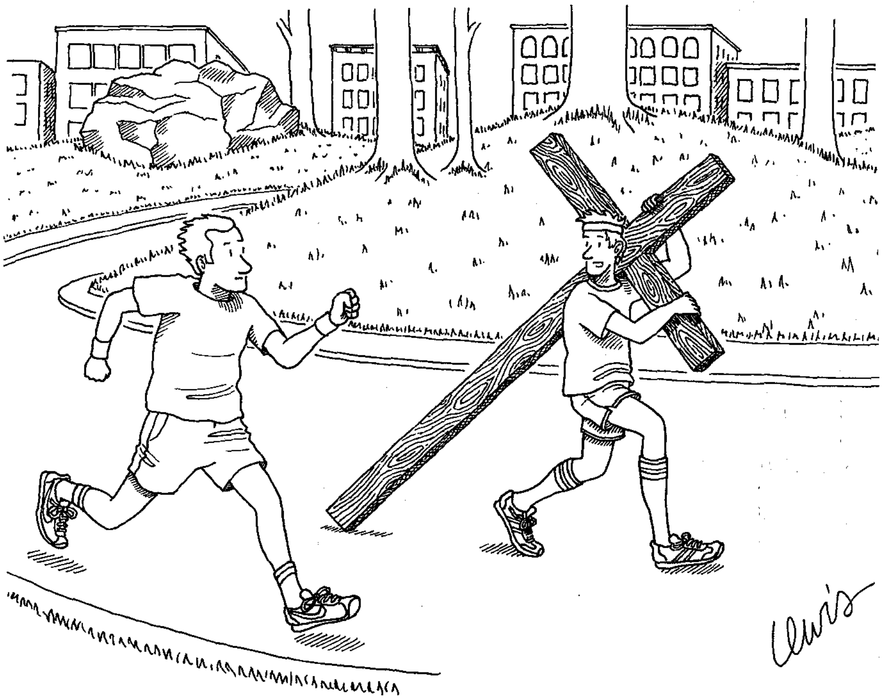
"Well, thank you," I said, not doing anything funny, not daring to ruin this. I helped refasten Buck into his blood-soaked safari top. We had eaten as he sat there in the half-light with the white hair tangled on his chest and the swelling already going down. He was that healthy, it was cause and effect, once I had hoovered most of the bad stuff out. Fact is, I could still taste him or the poison or probably the mix in my mouth. A blend: walnut, allspice, penny metal, black licorice, lamb medium-well. I watched him go. The traffic parted, like for Moses. "Come one, come all," I whispered through my screen door.

It was Buck's fourth wife took him to the cleaner's. She was not in residence. One July 4th, we heard she'd suddenly demanded half of everything and here he was already sharing with his first three. Her suit tipped him into bankruptcy. I hate that kind of selfishness in women. In anybody. He gave so much. Then she had to claim his car and wallet. The sheriff served a summons midshow. Flashing lights, sirens, horrible for Buck.

What else shut him down? Not the Health Department, though they could have. Grilled-cheese sandwiches were served to customers off a G.E. appliance meant for home use only and not too often cleaned. Buck's vats, where the gators did their shows (if you could call them shows), those might've used a weekly hosing-down with ammonia, Clorox. I had not volunteered to rush over and help. But *you* try and Ajax around thirty moody rattlers. All I knew, just when our neighborhood's social life had grown so routed through the Reptile Farm Canteen, just as I'd got, first, the taste of poison, then a taste of what other people's physical-type lives must be like and, I guess, daily—here came the state to close him down.

There was a huge new sign: "Snake-Gators-Etc. Going Out of Business. Everything Must Move." Buck soon sold the rattlers to researchers who believed their venom might cure cancer. A nature park outside Orlando sent a huge yellow Allied Van Line for the gators. All thirty-nine (Stumps, deceased, excepted) left here with silver duct tape wrapped clear around their heads, stacked like wriggling cordwood in the back of that dark truck. Oh, it was a black day along this overly bright stretch of U.S. 301, I can tell you. I stood there in Florida's latex glare as the van pulled off with every gator blinkered and discounted, lost to us forever.

In honor of the reptiles' exit, I had worn my lilac hat and all my white patent leather and every Bakelite bangle I could find. We held on to each other, Buck, Dixie, Peggy, and Tanya and me. Plus some young gents and the teenaged boys the girls had flirted with, just to keep them buying Cokes. Buck didn't shed a tear. He was the only one. "Well, I've gotten out of tight corners before, girls. But this is the End of the Age of the Snake Farm, probably. Hell, I'm a realist. All their rocket talk and Russian hatred has nixed many a laugh. Eisenhower and Mamie might've been customers here. But those European-type



"I've accepted him as my personal trainer."

• •

Kennedys? No roadside attractions for people that French-speaking, clean and stuck-up. Type that changes clothes three times a day without noticing. Thing is, it's nothing personal, way I see it. The Future is here and it gets hosed off way too often. And don't you gals suspect it's all based on damned Bad Science? I think nobody gives good value now, much less a decent doggone show. And where the fuck is the energy and fun in any of it? Excuse me, ladies."

"No sweat," I said.

Next morning, hired guys rolled up all Buck's signs. Those now proved no more substantial than window shades, and yet, for three good years, they'd got to feeling pretty monumental. During windstorms, their canvas snapped like the sails of the Mayflower. That sound and the surf's slamming made this seem the New World after all.

Suddenly, signs gone, the Atlantic's raw horizon showed again. But now it looked like a paper-cut cliff, Niagara. Buck's home-dug lake, gatorless, appeared about as exotic as some miniature-golf-course water trap. Gravel paths bound nowhere now circled back in case they missed it, circled back.

After our group goodbye to the gators, my friends left overnight in the middle of the dark. I later saw that as a kindness, really. The very next noon, a Haitian crew—carrying radios blaring French tunes—showed up like the Keystone Kops. They dug up all Buck's store-bought palm trees. Root balls were still wrapped in burlap from their last sale. Seeing those trees go off lonely and akimbo on one flatbed truck was like witnessing a slave auction of my friends. Unseen, I waved. From the second-story breezeway, I was physically sick. Well, guess who felt bleak to the point of suicide or moving back to Toledo mid-February?

Weeks after, you would see a Piggly Wiggly truck pull up, not having heard or believed, and with enough slimy salad in back to feed all terrariums on earth.

I never doubted Buck's tale about beating Hemingway at poker and what a whiner Papa was over losing sixty bucks. I believed my friend about his being overnight with Ava Gardner. Buck would say no more than that, except, below his dancing eyes, he kissed all his right hand's fingertips. He admitted just "Ava? Ava was a gentleman." And since Buck had once told me I was also somewhat one, that helped.

Buck had been exactly Ava's type:

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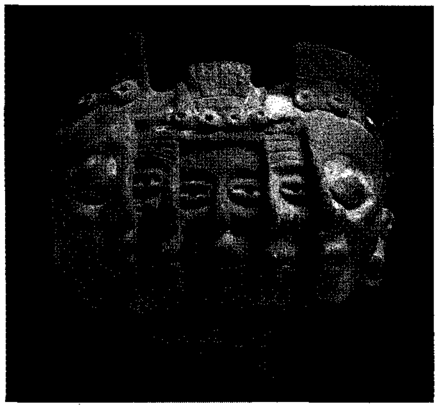

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the best gristle-sample of manhood ever to spring up on the wrong side of the snaky tracks. And a man still male enough at sixty-five or nine to keep three exes fighting for some stray lettuce head of his tossed attention. He never bragged, except maybe to tourists he’d never have to see again. You might think Buck had too little to boast of; but there was, in the high times at the Canteen, in our sole evening of sucking the poison out of one another, a kind of grandeur I can only hint at. After his wives, too loyal and numerous, having heard his pistol, powdered their noses and freshened their Liz-Cleopatra eyeliner, all of us knowing our last show was about to end, and after the day’s forlorn clump of exiting tourists spent a few last wadded dollars on postcards and plastic shark-tooth key chains, Buck would come chesting in, he would give us all a cobra smile with real white teeth and, including me, including me, say, “*Qué pasa*, girls?” He had it. That is all I can say. Buck definitely had it.

Once the Farm closed, if you dared walk over there, considering the sad and sandy blankness and those holes where rental palms had stood, you realized most of the cages had been nothing more than double-thick chicken wire. Made you wonder why the snakes had stayed. Maybe for the reason his ex-wives (and I) did. Because this really had been a working farm. Because everybody did his chores, even the snakes who struck against glass, aiming for the sunburned leg of some passing fat tourist boy, just to make him scream and force his mother, once she found no fang marks, to laugh. “It didn’t mean it, Willie. That’s just nature being nature, is all. That’s what snake farms teach us, son.”

Buck’s show evaporated overnight, and highway traffic sure moved faster all through here. Especially after a new Japanese-owned driving range removed the Farm’s every Day-Glo yellow-and-pink lead-up sign. These had once started promising him twenty miles due north, due south:

YOU ARE NOT BUT SIXTEEN MILES FROM
BUCK’S REPTILE FARM: SNAKES AND LIZARDS
SEEN BY THE CROWD HEADS OF EUROPE!
“EDUKATIONAL” FOR THE KIDDIES, TOO.
LARGEST GATORS IN CAPTIVITY:
MONEYBACK GUARANTEE OR A CLOSER LOOK!

That was my Buck all over.

Even now, one snaggled fact still stands there. Greenish and flaking, it is chipped like a Greek temple salt-preserved in Sicily: yes, his ticket booth’s rounded cinder-block steps arranged in a shape as close to scallop shell as blocks that size could possibly become. And up on top there’s the little cement platform, five feet above the sand, where people stood to buy admission for their families. Two hurricanes chipped the booth away in two huge molar chunks. But those steps yet survive.

I told myself not to expect to hear from any of the wives or him once they’d slid out of sight. That proved righter than I’d hoped. Still, wherever they washed up next, you wished them well.

(After all, when these showfolk found me here, in ’59, my lady library officer’s drink of choice—learned at conventions—had been a sticky cherry cordial. And by the time my snake charmers left in the middle of the night in ’63, I’d worked my way straight up to straight Jack Daniel’s. Who says there is no human progress?)

Those greened steps now stand framed against only browning palmetto scrub. But here’s the funny part. Funny in some small, sidelined way. On a cool afternoon, if you park down a ways then tiptoe back, if you take a peek at the little stage that platform makes beside its bog, you’ll often catch three to seven dozing there. Real snakes sound asleep, wild ones. They must love the heat a day of sun leaves banked in those old blocks. Maybe snakes enjoy being dry and up out of their usual mud. But, black snakes and cottonmouths, water moccasins and, once, a red-and-yellow coral snake some boy claimed he saw, they all seem to be waiting. Like auditioning, or hoping for a comeback. They seem to still want in, as paying customers, to see other like-minded creatures, but ones grown huge and therefore notable, forty times their weight. It’s as if local reptiles can yet remember Buck’s whole vivid show. It’s like they long, as I once did, to simply hear how he’d describe them!

Soon as the government closed Buck down, things grew silent fast around Los Parnassus Palms. I could not have simply left here overnight when my friends drove off. I owned property. Besides, they never asked.

Still, I knew that, if he ever thought of me, Buck would want his good-sport Esther to be getting on with this, her latest life among the others she'd spent elsewheres on the lam. My heart had lately grown so . . . unsystematic.

When first I bought Parnassus, I'd turned off all its signage. Then bargain-hunting oversexed salesmen kept making me explain myself. Finally, years back, I lit just those two low-watt neon letters. My "NO" warned cars away. Through monsoons and dry spells, one blue skull and crossbones—my spinster coat of arms—blazed day and night against stucco.

Five months after the Reptile Canteen closed, I spent an evening fearing the latest hurricane with a name like one of Buck's ex-wives'. As I lounged around the Main Office—alone, naturally—I noticed, there beside the table where we'd eaten our aftermath bacon and eggs and his favorite coffee cake, two light switches. Decades back, these'd been marked in some stranger's tidy pencil script "N." And, below that, "V." I now reached over and, inhaling, with the flair of some magician's assistant, flipped off the "N." Then, taking in two lungfuls of sea air, instead I just hit "V." For victory? Dream on.

I let it burn there, out in plain and common view. I cannot say it didn't partly shame me. Pink and raw and overly visible, so all by itself (in its upright fifth-grade cursive). I retreated to our crucial maroon davenport. I settled here, now facing our highway's every southbound headlight.

I crossed my arms and felt surprised to find myself this ready: I would wait again. For what? Something. Anything, though not quite anyone. Heck, I'd already had the best. I might need to make a few concessions next time; I knew that.

Buck used to flatter me: "Cozy how my big Show attraction stands right up across the road from your nice Shelter attraction, Esther." "That's easy for *you* to say." I rolled my eyes to make him laugh. He never failed, and in a baritone mahogany.

Now, almost half a year after losing sight of him, I felt represented by that blinking sign out there. He had taught me it pays to advertise. Come one, come all. It's a human right, to name at least what you'd *like* to offer. True, I might not be any motorist's idea of a final destination; but maybe I could pass as just another attraction along a roadside littered with such. —Because, you know what? You never know. And that's a great thing: how they keep us guessing. That comes in second, right after Hope.

Stranger things have happened than life's stopping twice at one convenient off-highway location. Plenty of free parking, God knows. And now, as each headlight played across the slackened front of this, of me—partly ruined yet still far from stupid—I felt I'd outgrown "NO" at last.

Once upon a time in America, a man from nowhere with nothing but shoulders and great teeth, a guy backboned with one idea while enjoying sufficient sharpie patter—he could put up steps to anything that he might make you see as Wonderful. And without bimonthly federal inspections, without any legal charter past a friend or two he called "our Board," that man could shake you down for exactly the number of buckaroos you'd actually part with. And he would send you off glad, with more of your own personal story than you'd had before he took your cash. And all this without exceptional Latin.

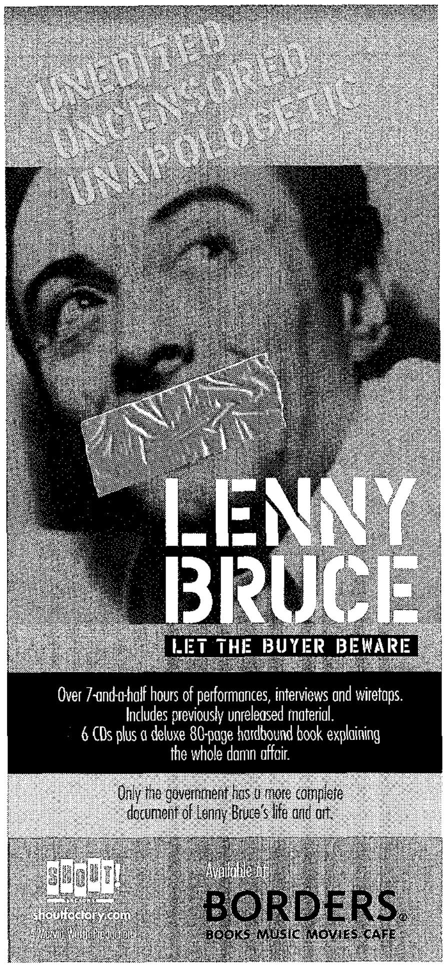
Now, through my office plate-glass, I could see the former site of his Attraction. It was lit up tonight, salt-white sand, edges of white breakers endlessly uncoiling. All viewed better thanks to the sudden commercial glare from here, me.

Burning pink, held up against everything, that one word, a full proud three feet high. Too raw a term. Too rude a come-on for a woman alone of my age and homeliness. Wasn't it too hardened an admission, even for Florida, right along U.S. 301, even at 2:18 A.M.?

And yet, leaning back, breathing for one again, my arms folded over a slack chest, I liked going braless beneath a favorite housecoat worn with only "our" bloomers. I would be smoking now, if I smoked. —Who is this woman hidden back of her neon? Why, it's Esther the Impenitent. Still on the lookout, feeling almost dignified:

VACANCY

Now I knew what it meant. ♦



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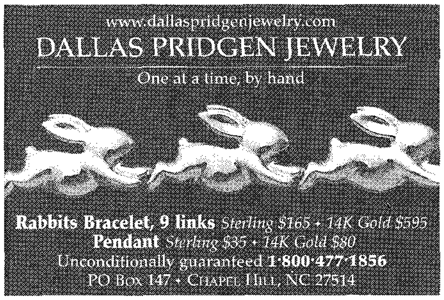

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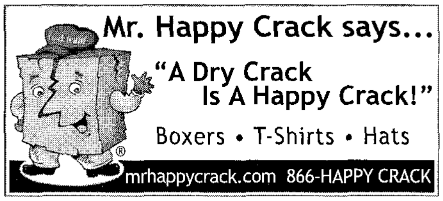

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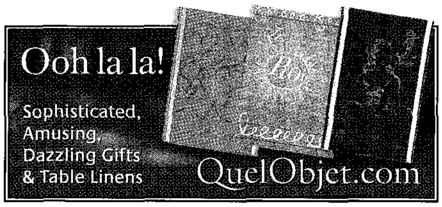

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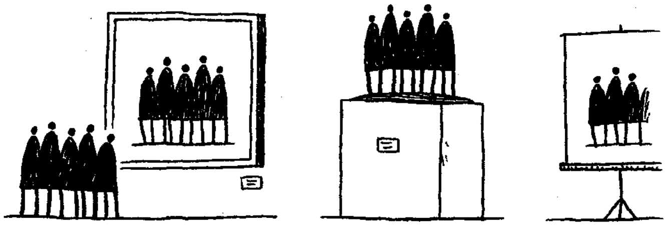


THE CURRENT CINEMA

IN AND OUT OF LOVE

The films of Pedro Almodóvar.

BY DAVID DENBY

Let me tell you a story. In a Catholic school in a small town in rural Spain, two boys, Ignacio and Enrique, fell in love. They went to the movies together and touched each other—a consummation of sorts. But the boys were only eleven, and their friendship was broken up by the schoolmaster, a priest named Manolo. Father Manolo, however, wasn't simply enforcing the rules. He had already laid hands on Ignacio, a sweet-faced choirboy, and he wanted him entirely for himself.

Pedro Almodóvar's triumphantly accomplished "Bad Education," which is both a summation of his career thus far and a deepening of his recent style, opens sixteen years later, in 1980. Ignacio (Gael García Bernal), now a young actor, brings a manuscript to Enrique (Fele Martínez), who has become a well-known movie director in Madrid. The manuscript chronicles the boys' friendship and what happened to Ignacio—he became a drag queen and a blackmailer. As Enrique reads the story, we see it enacted. Later, he turns it into a movie, only to be interrupted by the appearance of the priest, who tells his version of events. By now, the priest has turned his collar around—he is Mr. Berenguer, not Father Manolo—but he's still in love. Complex and devious beyond easy recounting, "Bad Education" is about the fallout from the ending of a "pure" love between boys, consecrated in an Almodóvaran temple—a movie theatre. Like so many of Almodóvar's films, it's also about memory and the dangerously self-serving act of telling stories. Storytelling, lying, and the eager trying on of selves have always been at the core of Almodóvar's alarmingly literal demand for liberty. La Agrado, one of Almodóvar's gabby, warmhearted transsexuals—from "All About My Mother" (1999)—puts it this way: "You are more and more authentic the more you look like someone you dreamed of being."

In "Bad Education," Almodóvar draws on elements from his own life, but the movie is not a confession. He has stated, for instance, that he was not abused as a boy. The movie is explicitly homoerotic, but then so was "Law of Desire" (1987), along with scenes in many of his other movies. Almodóvar, now fifty-three and, in recent years, the recipient of the kind of adulation offered to Bergman, Fellini, and Kurosawa four decades ago, revels in flagrantly disreputable material—cross-dressing and transsexuality, carnal dreams and rhapsodies, sex with an aura of violation. He has put theatricality and fantasy back into lust. As far as anyone can see, he has always been happily "out," and he may have little to confess. What's come "out" in "Bad Education" is a confirmation of the formal control he displayed in "Talk to Her," the sombre and beautiful movie he made in 2002. The two films are not a break with the past, but they might be seen as a liberation from a famously liberated style. For the first time since "Law of Desire," Almodóvar has made movies centrally about men, and both, perhaps not coincidentally, are resolutely serious.

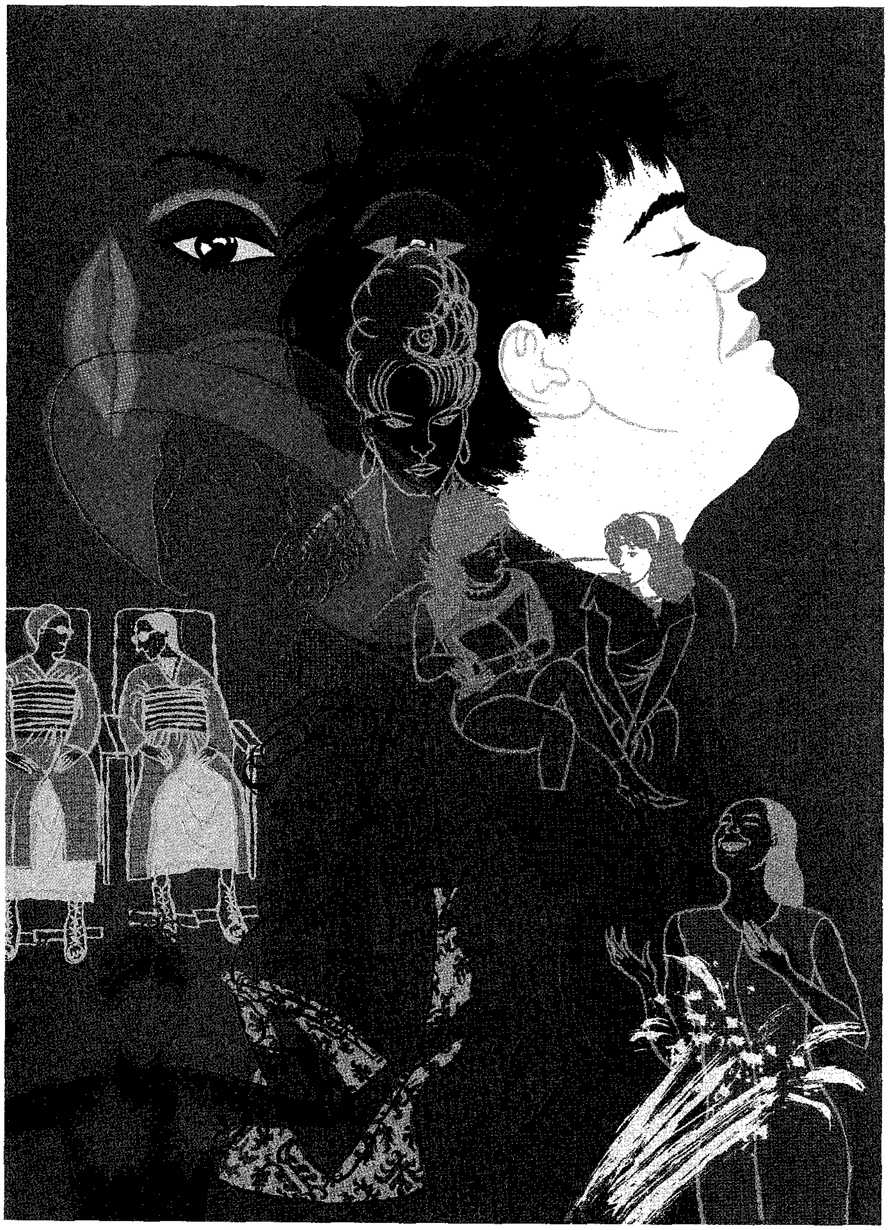
Magnificent, unbridled Medusas, broad-shouldered and long-waisted; tense housewives and avid professionals enraged over the misbehavior of some worthless lover; haggard mothers and bereft daughters, longing for connection even as they are repelled by each other's need—the films of Pedro Almodóvar have celebrated women. And not just women but women in an uproar. They are in love, they are betrayed, they lie, dissemble, commit murder. Their lives are defined by the feverish calamitousness of soap opera, by the conventions of Spanish movie melodrama, and, in particular, by Hollywood "women's pictures" of the forties and fifties, the mere sound of whose starring names—Lana, Ava, Bette, Rita, Joan—conjures up an era of sumptuous glamour and tempestuous emotionalism.

Most of Almodóvar's movies are romantic melodramas goosed into near-parody. He loves absurd reversals of fortune. In "Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!" (1990), for instance, an unhinged young man entraps a former porn star he's crazy about and demands not just sex with her but a family and children, and she winds up falling in love with him. Even when Almodóvar renders homage to a director utterly unlike himself, as he did in the mother-daughter epic "High Heels" (1991)—a mad retelling of Ingmar Bergman's "Autumn Sonata"—he squeezes the original story for its underlay of hysteria and competitiveness. By the end of "High Heels," a mother and daughter have shared a lover, the daughter has killed him and her stepfather, and a drama of female temperament begins to seem like a comedy of female temperament. Not just Bergman but such directors of glossy Hollywood melodramas as Michael Curtiz, Otto Preminger, King Vidor, and Douglas Sirk probably never imagined that the world of grand female emotion could be reconfigured as farce. How could they? In different ways, as serious artists or as masters of kitsch, they were immersed in creating illusions for an audience that wanted and needed to believe in what it saw. Almodóvar, in contrast, always lets us know that his actresses are performing, that what they offer is not a piece of life but a convulsively entertaining fiction.

There's an Oscar Wilde paradox at work in the physical appearance of these women: they seem to have taken off their faces so that we can see their masks. Almodóvar is not interested in discovering something profound in an actress. He's interested in electric immediacy, in presence. What could he do with a guileless, vibrantly natural, "transparent" performer like Liv Ullmann? He likes an actress who appears to be onstage even when she's sitting in a living room. A madcap couturier, he dresses women in reds and oranges, in tippy-tappy high heels and miniskirts, and celebrates their most unconventionally attractive features—Picassoesque hatchet noses, large ruby lips, masses of thick black hair, and sharply outlined eyes.

Leaving out the transvestites, the men in the movies Almodóvar made before "Talk to Her" are mostly handsome stiffs. Straight or gay, they are all caught up in the comic insanity of machismo. The Almodóvaran male was a Lothario, a betrayer who muttered fatalistic Spanish nonsense into a woman's ear; he was a relentless predator who longed to dominate some love object; he was a luscious young virgin, slender, cherubic, bare-rumped. (Antonio Banderas, with dark, liquid eyes and swollen lips, played both the second and third types in his youth.) Until recently, Almodóvar had shown little interest in men as people. Is he a caricaturist, then? An ironist? How could a director working out of what appears to be a gay-cabaret sensibility achieve such renown? Surely there has never been a world-famous director whose work is essentially camp. Or is Almodóvar's work not camp at all? The most readily enjoyable of all art-house directors—a natural-born entertainer—Almodóvar also has his mysteries. This teasing melodramatist-modernist may be something unprecedented in movie history.

Almodóvar's life is an urban gay man's version of a hero's tale. He was educated in the small town of Cáceres, during the Franco era, at a school run by Salesian Brothers. He escaped, whenever he could, to watch movies and listen to American and British pop. In the late sixties, at the age of sixteen, he left school and headed to Madrid, where he got a job at Telefónica, the Spanish national telephone company. He made connections: he finished work at three and, at night, frequented the Madrid underground. In the next decade, as Franco's reign came to an end, Almodóvar worked at the triple nexus of pop, gay, and commercial culture. He wrote music and comedy skits, designed *fotonovelas* and comics, and performed in curlers and a housedress as half of a parodic punk-rock duo called Almodóvar y McNamara. He collaborated with the avant-garde theatre troupe Los Goliardos, where he met his future star and muse, Carmen Maura. He shot his first movies in Super 8 film, without a soundtrack, and showed them in bars and at parties, performing all the speaking parts himself. In 1980, he moved into features, and became as much the chronicler of nighttime Madrid as Brassaï had been the chronicler of Paris cafés. In his movies, the countryside hardly exists, and "nature" may be no more than a poisoned mushroom pushed up by a corpse buried in someone's city garden.



His most recent movies may be seen as a liberation from a famously liberated style.

JOSÉ LUIS MERINO

Almodóvar has said, "My rebellion is to deny Franco. . . . I refuse even his memory. I start everything I write with the idea, What if Franco had never existed?" This claim is no doubt a way of avoiding an endless quarrel with the past, but it sounds like a myth, and we needn't believe it. The anti-clericalism, the erotic fantasias, the love of dressing up and acting out—the efflorescence of liberated expression in Almodóvar's films can no more be understood apart from Franco's clerical-military form of Fascism than Joyce's work can be separated from the Irish Catholic Church. To begin with, Almodóvar's way of not taking seriously the sexual transgressions that enrage conservatives is itself a political act. Again and again, he has ridiculed Spanish machismo—most openly in "Matador" (1986), which thrusts a sword of parody deep into the blood-and-cape solemnity of the national stereotype. Diego, a famous bullfighter who retired after he was severely gored, is a kind of mountebank philosopher of death. He masturbates to movie scenes in which women are offed, and he kills a few himself. At last, he meets his female counterpart, a lawyer in swirling capes who seduces young matadors and, just as they are about to reach orgasm, inserts an ornate hairpin into their necks. Not entirely to our surprise, the bullfighter and the lawyer make a pact. In a rush of giddy, gaudy passion, they die in each other's arms, their capes spread out on the floor beneath them. All this spectacular, highly patterned erotic play makes hash of the traditionalist version of Spanish character that Franco's authorities encouraged—the gestural majesty, the tautly defined, iconic emotions of the dance and the bullring. "Matador" is screwball, dirty-minded flamenco—ritual movement turned into lurid spoof. On the evidence of this movie, and others, Almodóvar seems to have nothing but distaste for the Spanish cult of cruelty. There is violence in his movies, but very little sadism; evil functions formally, as a plot device, but not emotionally, as a definer of character. Almodóvar identifies with the victim rather than with the conqueror, and he fills his movies with benevolent gestures and the pathos of lost love, the half-serious, half-ludicrous fatality of past acts replaying themselves in the turmoil of the present. He is Tennessee Williams's most talented heir.

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You that sang to me once sing to me now
let me hear your long lifted note
survive with me
the star is fading
I can think farther than that but I forget
do you hear me

do you still hear me
does your air
remember you
oh breath of morning
night song morning song
I have with me
all that I do not know
I have lost none of it

but I know better now
than to ask you
where you learned that music
where any of it came from
once there were lions in China

I will listen until the flute stops
and the light is old again

—*W. S. Merwin*

Almodóvar's interest in molten-eyed transvestites and vamping, sequinned drag queens may be the product of more than sexual curiosity. Such men open the floodgates of emotion without shame, and, however wistful and mixed up, they represent hope, as do the tall, restless street hustlers who become not transsexuals but omnisexuals—they have beautiful new breasts, which they show off to anyone who's interested, but they still have a male organ. They haven't changed gender—they've added one. Almodóvar's embrace of such men is so affectionate that we think less about perversion than about the manifold carnal possibilities of life—the unwillingness to give up anything. In "Law of Desire," Carmen Maura plays Tina, an actress who was born a boy. As a child, she ran off with her father and, at his urging, had a sex-change operation. Then he left her, and she became a lesbian and mother—she's raising her lover's daughter. Tina could be a joke on all the solemn talk of "gender" in recent years: her identity is not so much unstable as universal. In Almodóvar's films, identity is not "constructed" by social forces but created by fantasy, will, and humor. Self-generated, his people don't behave according to traditional stereotypes, but they don't behave according to liberationist stereotypes, either. What matters to the director is not whether they are straight or gay (the issue is hardly discussed) but what they want and what they do.

In "High Heels," there is a tall drag queen named Femme Letal (pronounced "Lay-*thal*," which sounds a lot more lethal). At the end of her act, a young woman walks backstage to say hello, and, to her astonishment (and ours), Letal, still in lipstick and mascara, jumps her. Gorgeous, hilarious, and highly gymnastic sex follows, and, eventually, a child is born. Fellini made people like Letal into grotesque freaks; Almodóvar unfreaks them. A credit at the end of "All About My Mother" reads, "Dedicated to Bette Davis, Gena Rowlands, Romy Schneider. . . . To all actresses who have played actresses. To all women who act. To all men who act and become women. To all people who want to be mothers. To my mother." In Almodóvar's world, you begin with the nurturing images of Hollywood and you end with mom. Just like everyone else, the transvestites and omnisexuals get grouchy, hungry, or tired, and some of them long for children. They leave the audience in remarkably good humor, relieved by the appearance of what the Spanish director Miguel Albaladejo called "the daily ordinariness of the extraordinary." That doesn't sound like camp at all.

As a boy, Almodóvar would go to a movie and entertain his family afterward by telling them the story, and making it juicier in the telling. For years, he's been doing the same thing as a filmmaker. It makes sense, I think, to regard his fourteen completed films as retold movies, as stories relished for spectacle and emotion, pleasure and suffering, with all the boring parts left out—the cumbersome narrative supports, the "motivation." Almodóvar jumps to the transactional moments: people meet and size each other up; they connect or rebuff each other on the spot. He rarely shoots gauzy, meandering love scenes. The sex is immediate, overwhelming. His is an anti-Freudian cinema: the connection between repression and violence, so important to his predecessor the surrealist Buñuel, has been broken—in Almodóvar's movies, everyone acts out. And by using multisexual characters he expands his narrative freedom. All sorts of linkages suddenly become possible; plots, hinged by changing desire, turn radically in an instant, establish parallel lines, double back on themselves.

Terse and decisive, the films are not full-scale dramatic fictions but fables, in the tradition of work by racy, fast-moving writers like Boccaccio or the creators of "A Thousand and One Nights." And, like Cervantes, Almodóvar multiplies narratives, laying stories within stories or piling closely related tales on top of one another. In "All About My Mother," a nurse named Manuela loses her son in a street accident in Madrid when the boy runs after Huma, an actress he adores who has been playing Blanche DuBois in "A Streetcar Named Desire." The grief-stricken Manuela goes to Barcelona and scours the pickup scene there for the boy's father, who, it turns out, has gained breasts and become Lola, a transsexual junkie. Manuela can't find him, but she falls in with two people—a nun who is also pregnant by Lola, and the high-flying Huma, who is now playing Blanche in Barcelona. Like the Thelma Ritter character in "All About Eve" (the reference is explicit), Manuela gets a job taking care of the star. At the same time, onstage, she fills in for Huma's female lover—who has run off—in the role of Stella, a role she performed years earlier in an amateur production. Both as Stella and in her relationship with Lola, Manuela is a woman sexually enthralled by an overpowering man. In the end, Lola shows up, only to die of AIDS; the nun dies in childbirth; and Manuela gets a son—the nun's baby, who has the same name, Esteban, and the same father, Lola, as her dead child.

Nutty as that story is, it parses. If anything, it intentionally over-parses. A movie like "All About My Mother" is an example of Almodóvar's insistence on the productive artificiality of storytelling. A story is not a version of life but an interpretation of experience; it's a way of telling, not a way of being, and it reverberates in every direction. Eager to make the audience concentrate on his meaning, this fabulist is extremely disciplined; his imagery may be flamboyant, but he keeps his camera still or gliding gently, and he arranges the visual design around a dominant color or pair of colors (red and black in "Matador," pale blue in "Talk to Her"). The color unifies the shocks and agitations of the tale, and the music, like Bernard Herrmann's throbbing scores for Hitchcock, exaggerates the characters' turmoils in a wash of overcharged strings. Almodóvar hasn't dropped the traditional narrative logic of temporal sequence, or cause-and-effect action, but the speed and the heated-up emotionalism of his dizzy plots are exhilarating. As you're watching, you consciously enjoy the pretense that life could be like this.

What strengthens the mocking, overdetermined fables and makes them real movies, not just sizzling erotic cartoons, is the intensity of the performances. Almodóvar may experiment with narrative plausibility, but, at the same time—and this is his great secret—he gets his actors to put real feelings into

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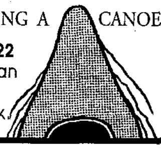

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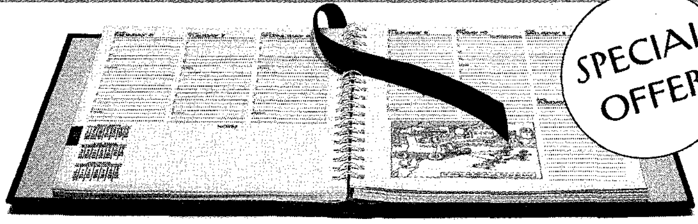

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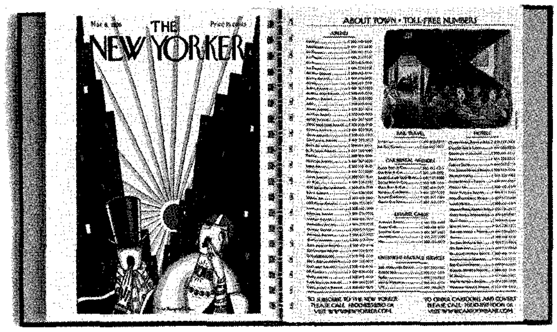

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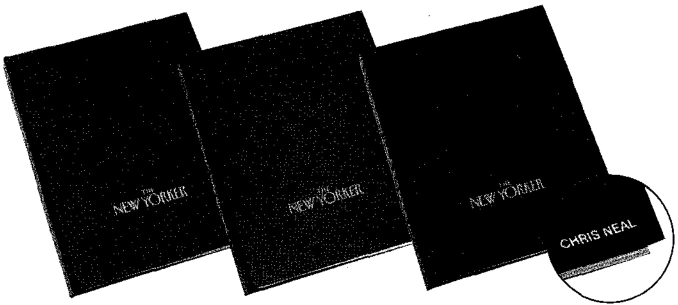
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his loopy stories. His characters may be strange, but they express common emotions—sexual obsession, love, the pain of loss, compassion. Their responses to the bizarre circumstances they find themselves in burst through the flimsy walls of plot. As a jilted lover in "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (1988), Carmen Maura skitters on high heels, rushing from one ridiculous confrontation to the next. "Women" is farce, and, physically, Maura gives an expertly stylized performance. But her eyes are alive with outrage. The way Almodóvar turns the plot inside out may be a joke, but the situation of a woman abandoned is not, and Maura holds your emotions even as the pinwheeling movie makes you laugh. Marisa Paredes, another Almodóvar favorite, has a haunted, mask-of-tragedy face, like Joan Crawford or Melina Mercouri. Big-boned, a growler, often rattled yet always generous, Paredes is close to exultation or breakdown; her despair is like blackest night. This is acting in the grand manner, but it's not ironic, and it's certainly not camp. Paredes never places quotation marks around her moods. People all over the world have been moved by Almodóvar's transvestites and roiling women. He's afraid of nothing, but he's a generous, playful, warm-spirited director—the last great humanist in cinema.

In "Talk to Her," the first of Almodóvar's recent male-centered movies, two men, strangers, attend a Pina Bausch ballet. Onstage, women, their eyes closed, bounce off the walls in anguish, while a man rushes to and fro in front of them, hastily moving chairs out of their way. The two spectators are touched, and they later form a bond, in a clinic where each cares for a comatose woman he idolizes. The ballet, with its themes of isolation and dependency, sets up the narrative in a manner that's poetically satisfying rather than explicit. Earlier, in his celebrations of female temperament, Almodóvar's dominant colors were oversaturated and bright, and he loved abrupt shifts of tone, but in "Talk to Her" the colors are soft-hued and blended, the imagery is smooth and harmonious. Past and present flow together, too; everything seems touched with melancholy longing and the power of what's not stated. The movie has the feeling of a chastened reckoning. Could "Talk to Her" be interpreted as an allegory of the way a gay director imagines his relationship to women—caring for them, even adoring them, but never quite reaching them?

For the moment, Almodóvar has stopped trying to understand women. Male homosexuality is front and center in "Bad Education," and the mood is one not of longing but of bitter acceptance of the deceptions and manipulations that accompany desire. In Ignacio's story, we see him grown up, in drag, confronting Father Manolo, and claiming to be his own sister. Almodóvar is still playing with alternate selves, though the play has got more dangerous, the lying more selfish. Gael García Bernal (from "The Motorcycle Diaries"), with his pout and sudden smile, is the male successor to the lying scarlet women who lived at the center of old Hollywood and Almodóvar films. At one time or another in this movie, García Bernal plays the drag queen, a desirable gay cupcake, and a straight young actor. The trying on of selves has suddenly taken on a darker cast; Ignacio is perhaps the first character in Almodóvar's movies to be judged completely amoral, and the movie asks, Is love possible between men, or is it possible only between innocent boys? Love expressed by women is suffering and theatre; when it's felt by men, it may be suffering, too, but it's also a series of manipulations and traps. The truth of what happened to Ignacio and Enrique emerges in pieces: the three narratives, as they expand and correct one another, become mirrors producing endless off-angle reflections. The playful young Almodóvar was a carefree dazzler who settled on one charged emotion at a time. At fifty-three, he still plays, but in a formally complex and sinuous style that embraces ambiguity and regret. In the next stage of his extraordinary career, Almodóvar may become the most bitterly intelligent director since Billy Wilder. ♦

LIFE IN VERMONT

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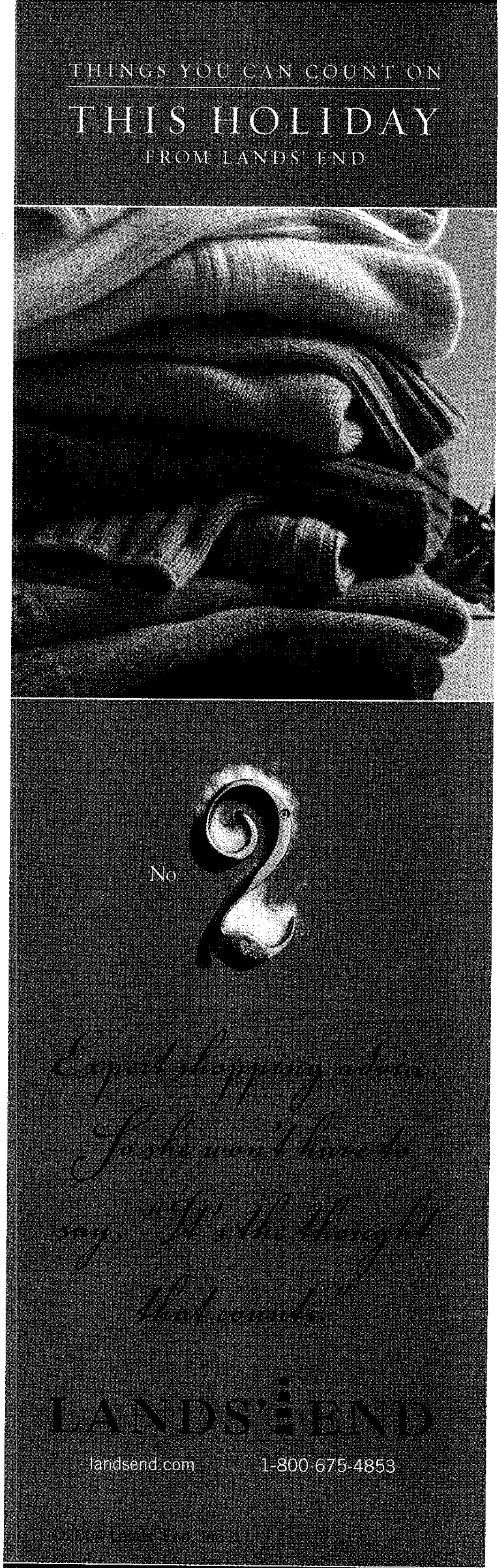
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POP MUSIC

BINGO IN SWANSEA

Maya Arulpragasam's world.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

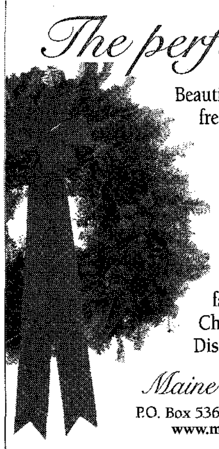
"World music" is a category that does nobody any favors. Entirely disparate performers, like the dapper Brazilian singer-songwriter Caetano Veloso and the African blues guitarist Ali Farka Toure, get lumped together in American record stores simply because they don't sing exclusively in English. Also, European and American pop have saturated the world to such an extent that Kylie Minogue and Tupac are now more world music than, say, the Malian singer Oumou Sangare. Finally, most of what you find in the world-music section tends toward the gentle, melodious, and uplifting, as if the world were that way.

The music of Maya Arulpragasam, a twenty-seven-year-old Sri Lankan Tamil who moved to England when she was nine and performs under the name M.I.A., is not like that. Anyone who has trolled through bins on Canal Street for videos of kung-fu movies or reggae mix tapes will recognize M.I.A.'s first single, "Galang" (2003), as an example of actual, on-the-ground world culture: synthetic, cheap, colorful, staticky with power. The beat is shuffling and abrasive, made from what sounds like the by-products of some other, more polite song. It most resembles Jamaican dancehall patterns, but with a twist. Alongside the beat runs a distressed motif that may have been a melody before it was Xeroxed fifteen times. The lyrics combine the exhortations of dancehall ("London calling and speak the slang now, boys say *wa*, go on girls say *wa wa*"), the embattled war mentality of American hip-hop ("Fed's gonna get you pull the strings on your hood / One paranoid youth blazin' through the hood"), and a scenario that sounds far removed from Leicester Square: "They say river's gonna run through / work is going to save you / praying you will pull through / suck a dick, he'll help you / don't let them get to you / if he's got one you get two / Backstab your crew sell it out to sell you." The verses are simply stitched together, without dogma, by a chorus that is classic dance-floor doggerel: "Blaze to blaze, *galang a lang alanga* / Purple haze, *galang a lang a langlang*."

And then the music stops. We are left with a queasy keyboard peal as a multitrack chorus of Mayas calls out, "*Ya ya heeey, woy oy ee he hay yo.*" It isn't a pop chorus, or any sound that you'd hear on American radio, even if the station were playing, you know, world music. It's a voice from a place where kids throw rocks at tanks, where people pull down walls with their bare hands. It could be the sound of a carnival, or a riot.

This year, Arulpragasam began performing live, and, as she was preparing for her first appearance in England, I arranged to meet her in the lobby of a stylish central London hotel. She is small but not fragile. Her hair is long and wavy, and she moves deliberately, confidently. She was wearing a cotton jacket and pants, both imprinted with a pattern that you'd see on pajamas, and carried a handbag of the same fabric and pattern, with the colors inverted. Her lacquered yellow pumps looked, to a New Yorker, like a repurposed cab door. Except for the shoes, every item was made by her or her friends. "That's just the way of living, with Sri Lankans," she said. "You just make everything. If you want clothes, you make it. If you want a table, you make it."

Arulpragasam said that her mother brought her and her siblings to England in 1986, as hostilities between the ruling Sinhalese and the Tamil minority were ramping up. Her mother is a seamstress—"She sews medals for the Royal Family and world leaders for minimum wage." The family took a flat in Phipps Bridge Estate, a housing project twenty minutes south of London. "We were



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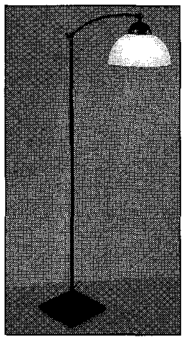

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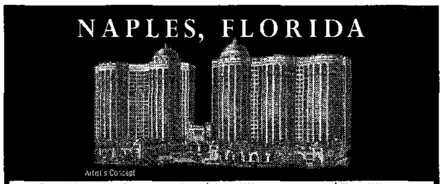

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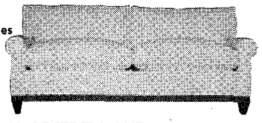

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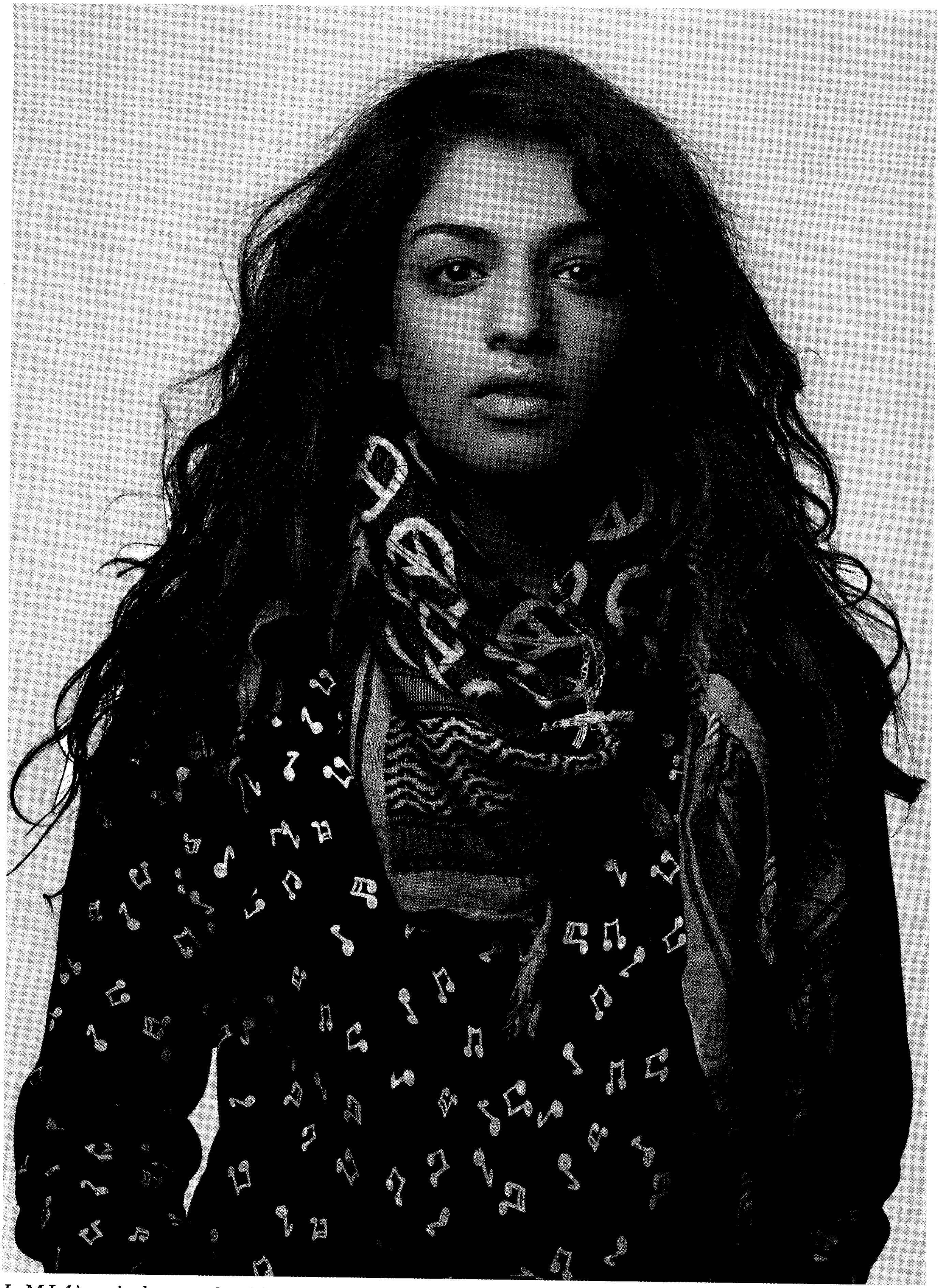

In M.I.A.'s music, the personal and the political are one, and you can dance to it. Photograph by Craig McDean.

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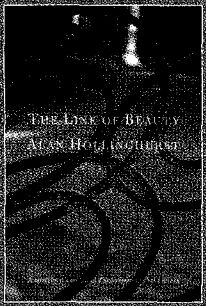

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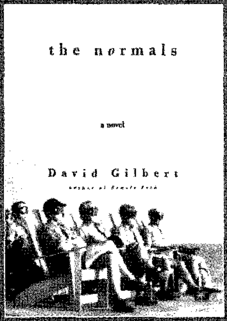

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BLOOMSBURY

one of the two Asian families that lived there," Arulpragasam said. "I used to come home from school and see people burgling my house, just walk past with my telly. But it wasn't as horrible as being in Sri Lanka." Eventually, the family found better housing, and at twenty-two Arulpragasam graduated from Central St. Martins College of Art and Design with a film degree.

In 2001, Justine Frischmann, who leads the rock band Elastica, commissioned Arulpragasam to make a film of the band on tour. Between shows, Arulpragasam began tinkering with an instrument called the Roland MC-505 Groovebox, an all-in-one drum-machine-and-keyboard unit that lets a musician create rough, electronic songs quickly. It suited her pragmatic nature.

M.I.A.'s début album, "Arular," will be released in February. Arulpragasam wrote most of its thirteen tracks at home on the 505 and then fleshed them out with the help of a series of professional producers, including Richard X, Anthony Whiting, and Switch. The overall effect is like what a politically minded class of fourth graders might do for a term project if they had access to a lot of electronic toys: joyous, spring-heeled, impatient, unafraid to speak out. "Someone like me has never made it on the radio before, ever, or on anyone's TV," Arulpragasam said. "And the boringest channels I can make it on the better. I want people to listen to me while they're playing bingo in Swansea."

Maybe. On the album, Arulpragasam talks about teen-age prostitution, "part-time jobbers in call centers," and "comfort bars." It's hard to imagine Clear Channel approving "Sunshowers," which blends a small, delightful thump with a melody quote from a seventies song by Dr. Buzzard's Original Savannah Band. After calling out, "From the Congo to Colombo!"—the Sri Lankan capital—Arulpragasam sings, "Can't stereotype my thing yo / I salt and pepper my mango," and, later, "Like P.L.O., we don't surrender." What makes this genuine world music, aside from the references, is the weaving of the political into the fabric of what are still, basically, dance tunes. Any division of life into personal and political halves is absent. Even in "Amazon," where Arulpragasam sings of being "blindfolded under homemade lanterns / somewhere in the Amazon, they're holding me ransom," she also observes, "Palm trees in the wet smells amazing." In the song's chorus, she sounds utterly casual, like an American teen-ager calling her mom after getting out of a movie at the multiplex: "Hello, this is M.I.A. / could you please come get me?" In the world, disasters can be everyday events.

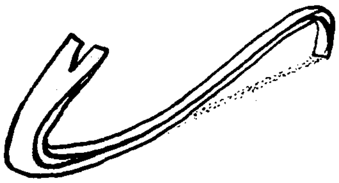
M.I.A.'s live show took place on the evening of November 5th, Guy Fawkes Day, at a Camden rock club on Chalk Farm Road. Yellow bonfires burned on side streets all over the city. Inside, the crowd was young, scruffy, and nearly all white. Arulpragasam's British manager duct-taped a banner reproducing M.I.A.'s spray-painted, circular orange-and-green logo to the turntables, which were suspended from the ceiling by chains. The d.j., an American from Philadelphia known as Diplo, played a set of fast, rhythmic Brazilian music called "baile funk"—itself a variation of a dance music from Miami called "bass"—and then began playing Jamaican dance-hall songs. The crowd seemed happy but unsure what to do with, or to, the pulsing music. After half an hour of other people's music, Arulpragasam took the stage with her backup singer, a woman named Cherry, who came to England from the Grenadines.

A stark rhythm started, followed by distorted handclaps, a low thrum, and a tiny cover of metallic bangs and screeches. Arulpragasam appeared in an elaborately embroidered satin jacket, something you might see on Chinese gang members in those pirated kung-fu DVDs. She began to knock her knees together in a bow-legged dance borrowed from Elvis Presley and the Jamaican singer Sean Paul. "Pull up the people, pull up the poor! Pull up the people, pull up the poor!" she sang, squeaking up an octave on the word "people." The beat was flecked with bits of shiny material, as if competing with the holiday fireworks outside. Diplo suddenly began tossing out CDs. People caught them or were hit by them, and began to realize that they should be dancing. When the show ended, Diplo kept d.j.ing, and Maya and her friends stood by the stage, unwilling to stop moving. They didn't look much like anyone in the club. It didn't seem to bother them. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

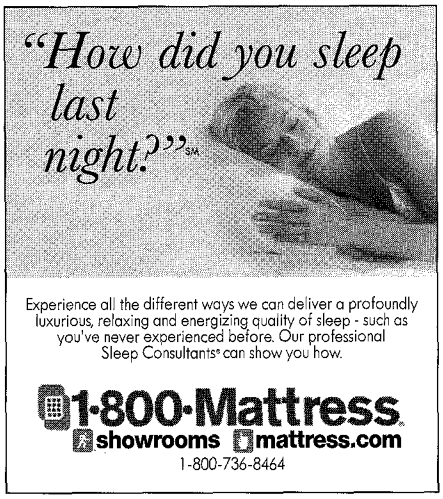
Gilead, *by Marilynne Robinson (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $23).* Robinson, the author of the classic "Housekeeping," has kept readers waiting twenty-three years for her second novel. It takes the form of a letter, written in the nineteen-fifties, from a seventy-something Iowa minister to his young son, the product of a late marriage. The Reverend John Ames feels that he is in his final days. Nominally, he is writing down the boy's "begats"—three generations of Reverend Ameses, each a little less storied than his forebear—but he is also sifting his long-considered personal faith. At first, there isn't much urgency to the Reverend's task, and we're stuck Sunday-strolling through too many homiletic passages ("He was a good man"; "Well, that's the human condition, I suppose"). By book's end, however, when a little fire enters his world, the thoughtful Reverend's counsel sharpens, small wounds deepen, and a credible wisdom emerges. "It is worth living long enough to outlast whatever sense of grievance you may acquire," he affirms.

Citizen Girl, *by Emma McLaughlin and Nicola Kraus (Atria; $24.95).* The co-authors of "The Nanny Diaries" encountered nearly as many obstacles in bringing their next venture to print—the original publishers, on seeing the first draft, demanded the advance back—as its heroine, Girl, does in trying to stay employed without compromising her principles. Two years out of Wesleyan, she is fired from a feminist nonprofit and lands at My Company, a slick dot-com. My Company wants to "leverage" its data on women's interests, and Girl is put in charge of a feminist "rebranding." After a disillusioning focus group with N.Y.U. gender-studies majors, she caves in and substitutes a pitch full of feminism lite, which is used to woo clients who care nothing for social goals. In "The Nanny Diaries," McLaughlin and Kraus successfully parodied the world they knew; here it's hard to keep track of the (rather blunt) barbs as they wobble toward their various targets.



His Excellency, *by Joseph J. Ellis (Knopf; $26.95).* Ellis, who wrote so gracefully about the early American Republic in "Founding Brothers" (Madison, Hamilton, Adams, et al.) and "American Sphinx" (Jefferson), now turns to Washington, whom he calls "the Foundingest Father of them all." Ellis confesses to a boyhood fascination with his subject, and Washington appears as a mysterious, somewhat vain, and altogether towering figure. Ellis is particularly good on the years after the War of Independence, when Washington, in semi-retirement, was absorbed by what he called "the peculiar circumstances of my case"—his heroic legacy. He agreed, with some hesitation, to preside over the Constitutional Convention, in Philadelphia in 1787, and soon realized that, with the ratification of the Constitution, he would not be able to escape the "clouds & darkness" of the Presidency. "What we see clearly as a glorious capstone to his career," Ellis writes, seemed to Washington "more like a highly problematic sequel."

Racial Culture, *by Richard T. Ford (Princeton; $27.95).* Ford, a law professor at Stanford, takes aim at the well-intentioned efforts to enshrine cultural differences in law—a black airline employee's right to wear a braided cornrow hair style, for instance—and suggests that they often push people "into displays of stereotypical group behavior" and into embracing the stereotype as their "authentic" identity. Ford is deliberately provocative and his arguments are ingenious, often funny, and sometimes remarkably personal. In contrast to the critical scrutiny he brings to bear on the identity-politics movement, he gives something of a free pass to the cosmopolitan ideals he favors. Disarmingly, though, he reassures us that—legal considerations aside—his sympathies are ultimately with the airline employee: "I think she should have been allowed to wear her braids."



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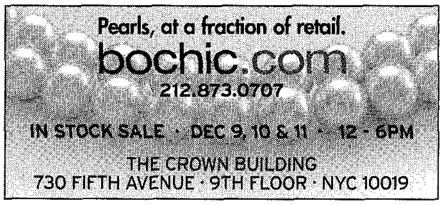

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GET HAPPY

Richard Wilbur and the poetry of profusion.

BY ADAM KIRSCH

In 1953, literary history—acting through the good offices of Edna Ward, of Wellesley, Massachusetts—brought together two of the most gifted, and least similar, American poets of the postwar era. Mrs. Ward was the mother-in-law of Richard Wilbur—at the age of thirty-two, the author of two acclaimed books of verse—and a friend of Aurelia Plath, whose twenty-year-old daughter, Sylvia, had just endured the hellish summer she later chronicled in "The Bell Jar." Wilbur was invited, as he wryly recalls in his poem "Cottage Street, 1953," "to exemplify / The published poet in his happiness, / Thus cheering Sylvia, who has wished to die." Of course, Wilbur's good will could not make a dent in Plath's misery: he describes himself as "a stupid lifeguard" who finds "a girl . . . immensely drowned." But the meeting was productive in another way: decades later, after Plath had written, died, and become a myth, it offered Wilbur a test and an emblem of his own, very different poetic calling.

In his poem, Wilbur slyly turns Mrs. Ward's polite inquiry about tea—"if we would prefer it weak or strong"—into a literary and moral question. Plath, of course, preferred it strong, in art and in life; she would go on, in Wilbur's words, "to state at last her brilliant negative / In poems free and helpless and unjust." But where does this leave Wilbur, whose poems are brilliantly affirmative, and who has enjoyed all the blessings Plath did not—longevity, reputation, worldly success? Does the fact that he was destined for happiness condemn his poetry to be weak, the tepid milk to Plath's acrid lemon?

The question Wilbur asks in "Cottage Street, 1953" has been posed by critics since the beginning of his career—starting with Randall Jarrell, whose review of Wilbur's second book, "Ceremony," complained that Wilbur "never goes too far, but he never goes far enough." And it echoes from beginning to end of the "Collected Poems 1943-2004" (Harcourt; $35), which will be Wilbur's monument. How does a poet who feels himself, in the words of an early poem, "Obscurely yet most surely called to praise" practice that calling in an age when poetry is overwhelmingly drawn to crisis, confession, and complaint?

This is more than just a matter of literary fashion, though in Wilbur's public statements one can often sense his impatience at being typecast as the placid straight man to his wilder contemporaries—above all, Robert Lowell. Lowell and Wilbur made their poetic débuts in the same postwar moment; Lowell's "Lord Weary's Castle" won the Pulitzer Prize in 1947, the year that Wilbur's "The Beautiful Changes" appeared. And it was Lowell, much more than Plath, whom critics perpetually used as a foil when describing Wilbur. In a 1964 interview, Wilbur ruefully recited the standard contrast: "I'm all grace and charm and short gains, and he's all violence and . . . Well, he's Apollo and Dionysus locked in a death grip."

Lowell, like Plath, John Berryman, and countless lesser poets, wrote about and out of a spiritual turmoil that amounted to, or resulted in, madness. Writing about his experience in a psychiatric ward in "Waking in the Blue," from his hugely influential 1959 book "Life Studies," Lowell insisted on the dangerous and pathetic majesty of the mad: he writes of Stanley with his "kingly granite profile," of Bobbie, "a replica of Louis XVI / without the wig." Wilbur's poem "Driftwood," by contrast, declares his own allegiance to "emblems / Royally sane,"

> Which have ridden to homeless wreck, and
> long revolved
> In the lathe of all the seas,
> But have saved in spite of it all their dense
> Ingenerate grain.

Wilbur has always been conscious that his particular poetic gifts and spiritual resilience were untimely. He started writing, as he later recalled, "for earnest therapeutic reasons during World War II," in an effort to bring the sanity of art to bear on "a personal and an objective world in disorder." (Wilbur served as a front-line infantryman in Europe, after his reputed radicalism got him kicked out of Army cryptography training.) The poems of his first book treat his war experiences in a style so elaborately formal that the most awful subjects are sublimated into irony, or even black comedy. There is something deliberately, monstrously cartoonish about "Mined Country," where "Cows in mid-munch go splattered over the sky." The persistence of the mines—"Danger is sunk in the pastures . . . / Ingenuity's covered with flowers!"—is Wilbur's way of writing about the persistence of the war itself, with all its psychic casualties: "it's going to be long before / Their war's gone for good," he soberly predicts.

But in this poem, as throughout "The Beautiful Changes," Wilbur's style, influenced by the estranging precision of Marianne Moore and the courtly ironies of John Crowe Ransom, makes disorder almost parodically articulate. Surely there has never been a more aestheticized vision of K.P. than Wilbur's in "Potato":

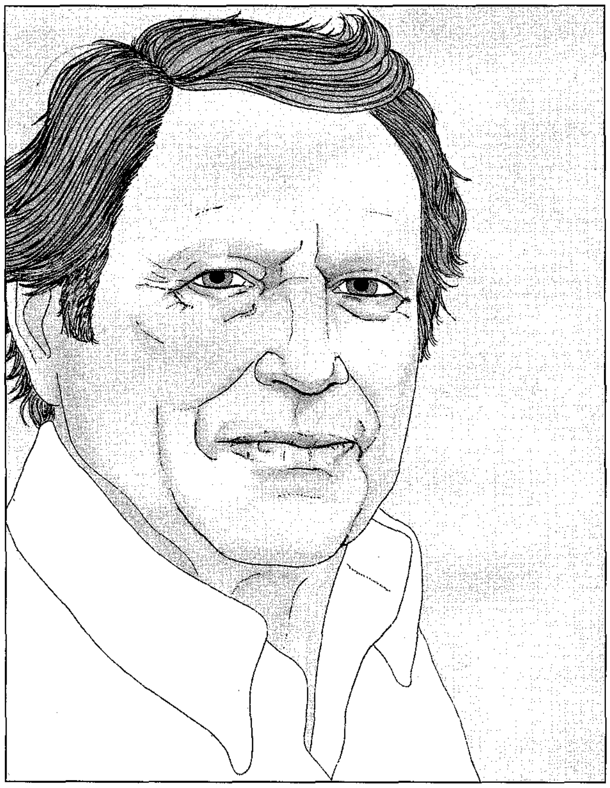
> Scrubbed under faucet water the planet skin
> Polishes yellow, but tears to the plain insides;
> Parching, the white's blue-hearted like hungry hands.
>
> All of the cold dark kitchens, and war-frozen gray
> Evening at window; I remember so many
> Peeling potatoes quietly into chipt pails.

Randall Jarrell, whose experience of military life was much milder than Wilbur's (he served at a Stateside airbase), was far more willing to admit the sorrow and pity of war into his poetry. There is nothing in Wilbur that resembles Jarrell's defiant matter-of-factness in "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner": "When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose."

LARA TOMLIN

But then, as Jarrell wrote, "The real war poets are always war poets, peace or any time"; and the same holds true of peace poets, in whose company Wilbur confessedly belongs. In "Up, Jack," Wilbur looks to Falstaff as a tutelary spirit for the postwar world, "a god / To our short summer days and the world's wine." Wilbur's refined epicureanism is far removed from Falstaff's grossness, but the poet dares, like the fat knight, to make an ethic of enjoyment. There is something quietly polemical about Wilbur's proud adoption-by-translation, in "Ceremony," of La Fontaine's "Ode to Pleasure":

> For games I love, and love, and every art,
> Country, and town, and all; there's nought my mood
>   May not convert to sovereign good,
> Even to the gloom of melancholy heart.
> Then come; and wouldst thou know,
>   O sweetest Pleasure,
> What measure of these goods must me befall?
> Enough to fill a hundred years of leisure;
>   For thirty were no good at all.



In an age of angst, Wilbur is a poet of artful enjoyment.

Such praise of mundane joys defies the predominant trend of English and American poetry since Eliot, if not since Wordsworth. Against the potent myth of the Romantic *poète maudit*—the glamorous lineage of Chatterton, Shelley, Keats, Rimbaud, and Hart Crane, fatally revived in Wilbur's own time by Plath, Lowell, and Berryman, among others—Wilbur sets the unfamiliar ideal of the *poète bénit*. In a 1977 *Paris Review* interview, he specifically rejected the tragic glamour of a Berryman, who had compared writing to surgery: "I am obliged to perform in complete darkness / operations of great delicacy / on myself." Berryman, Wilbur said, "was such a very hard worker that he lived almost entirely within his profession. . . . The impression one is left with is of a man who is working desperately hard at his job. Well, I admire that, but I think it can break your health and destroy your joy in life and art."

Throughout his long career, Wilbur has remained committed to that ideal of "joy in life and art," and has been amply rewarded with achievement and honors in both spheres. After the Army and a stint in graduate school, Wilbur—like most poets of his generation—earned his living as a college professor. Unlike the teaching careers of many poets, though, his was marked by long and steady tenures: twenty years at Wesleyan University, then a further ten at Smith College. He was just as warmly embraced by the institutions of literary life. Born in 1921, he won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award in 1957 (for his collection "Things of This World"), received the first of many honorary doctorates in 1960, and in 1987 was appointed United States poet laureate; he received a second Pulitzer in 1989 for his "New and Collected Poems," which this "Collected Poems" supersedes. He has also enjoyed success in the theatre, as a translator of the plays of Molière and as the lyricist for Leonard Bernstein's operetta "Candide." All this seems highly becoming to a poet of fruitful activity, not barren speculation.

Wilbur's position was often a lonely one, however, in a period that tended to view all affirmation as mere bourgeois complacency. One can get a good idea of the literary climate in which Wilbur began to write from Lionel Trilling's great study "Sincerity and Authenticity," published in 1972. Trilling suggests that English literature from Shakespeare to Henry James had agreed on an ideal of earthly life, on the reward that awaits characters who live "happily

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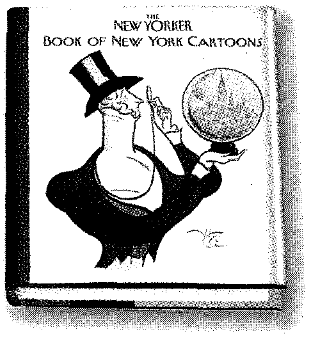

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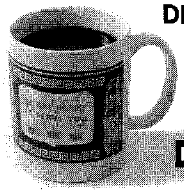

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ever after." This is the worldly felicity promised by the goddess Juno in "The Tempest": "Honour, riches, marriage blessing, / Long continuance and increasing." "It has to do," as Trilling says, "with good harvests and full barns and . . . affluent decorum." But "in the literature of our own day," Trilling goes on to argue, "the visionary norm of order, peace, honour, and beauty has no place." Both writers and readers instinctively meet it with "bitter contemptuous rejection," whether out of "despair over the impossibility of realizing the vision" or out of a profoundly modern disbelief that any earthly happiness could satisfy the needs of the spirit. Rather than worldly completeness, the twentieth-century mind seeks in literature "the disintegration which is essential if it is to develop its true, its entire, freedom."

Strangely enough, the whole course of Trilling's argument—right down to the image of "good harvests and full barns"—was anticipated, and disputed, by Wilbur in a poem from his 1956 collection, "Things of This World." In "Sonnet," Wilbur offers a characteristic response to the problem of the "happily ever after":

> The winter deepening, the hay all in,
> The barn fat with cattle, the apple-crop
> Conveyed to market or the fragrant bin,
> He thinks the time has come to make a stop,
>
> And sinks half-grudging in his firelit seat,
> Though with his heavy body's full consent,
> In what would be the posture of defeat,
> But for that look of rigorous content.

Worldly satisfaction, Wilbur acknowledges, can have the look of defeat, because it means that there is nothing more to aspire to. He insists, though, that what looks like defeat should really be understood as contentment, the only contentment available in this world: of labor completed, tasks achieved, the future secured. Still, in the last lines of "Sonnet," he acknowledges that the weary, satisfied farmer always remains haunted, even reproached, by another figure—the scarecrow that stands in the field, "floating skyward its abandoned hands / In gestures of invincible desire."

Wilbur is too honest a poet to deny the persistent glamour of the scarecrow's yearnings; but his instincts are all on the side of the farmer's contentment. And throughout his "Collected Poems" Wilbur is generally uncomfortable when he tries to imagine discontent, or what Trilling called "disintegration." From time to time over his long career, Wilbur has attempted poems of comprehensive moral statement, which aim to do justice to the horror of the modern world. But these poems are among his least convincing, because his invocations of evil seldom avoid seeming merely dutiful. Certainly, this is the case in "On the Marginal Way," from his 1969 collection "Walking to Sleep." The poem begins with a walk on a beach that becomes a scene of horror:

> The rocks flush rose and have the melting shape
> Of bodies fallen anyhow.
> It is a Géricault of blood and rape,
> Some desert town despoiled, some caravan
> Pillaged, its people murdered to a man.

It is typical of Wilbur that this murderous vision should be, precisely, a vision, a mirage. Indeed, what Wilbur sees is twice removed from reality: the rocks remind him not of "blood and rape" themselves but of "a Géricault," an already aestheticized violence. And while Wilbur goes on to invoke "Auschwitz' final kill," the poem does not take account of that evil in such a way that the memory of evil would affect the imagination of good. Instead, in its last stanzas, "On the Marginal Way" turns away from evil altogether, in order to receive an unaccountable consolation:

> And like a breaking thought
> Joy for a moment floods into the mind,
> Blurting that all things shall be brought
> To the full state and stature of their kind.

This sort of joy is not so much the conclusion to an argument as a complexion of the mind. As he explained in the *Paris Review* interview, "To put it simply, I feel that the universe is full of glorious energy, that the energy tends to take pattern and shape, and that the ultimate character of things is comely and good. I am perfectly aware that I say this in the teeth of all sorts of contrary evidence, and that I must be basing it partly on temperament and partly on faith, but that is my attitude."

If Wilbur's essentially hopeful temperament leaves him ill-equipped for certain kinds of moral inquiry, however, it is also the source of his enormous poetic gifts. No other twentieth-century American poet, with the possible excep-

"Aren't you getting a little too attached to the lab animals?"

tion of James Merrill, demonstrates such a Mozartean felicity in the writing of verse. This is partly a matter of formal mastery: Wilbur has written the best blank verse of any American poet since Frost. Yet Wilbur's formal poetry never has the slightly defensive tone that afflicts many writers of formal verse in this era of free verse. Just as his spirit takes naturally to "rigorous content," so his musical imagination takes naturally to contented rigor. "I have no quarrel at all with Emerson," he has remarked. "He said, 'not meter, but a meter-making argument makes poetry,' and I think that's true. I simply write a kind of free verse that ends by rhyming much of the time."

This seeming paradox is actually a key truth about Wilbur's genius: for him, the conventional *is* organic. More than a matter of verse technique, this is the theme and argument of some of his best poems. In "A Baroque Wall-Fountain in the Villa Sciarra," Wilbur contrasts two Italian fountains that are also two ways of being in the world. The Baroque fountain of the title is a triumph of fantastic ingenuity, all shells and fauns and cherubs: "More addling to the eye than wine, and more / Interminable to thought / Than pleasure's calculus." But the poet cannot quite dismiss the suspicion that art should be more than just delightful: "Yet since this all / Is pleasure, flash, and waterfall, / Must it not be too simple?" Maybe, he wonders, there is more truth and more honesty in "the plain fountains that Maderna set, / Before St. Peter's," whose simple aspiring jet is a legible emblem of Romantic yearning and disappointment: "the main jet / Struggling aloft until it seems at rest / In the act of rising, until / The very wish of water is reversed."

There is no doubt which of these two fountains appears more "modern," in Trilling's sense. But Wilbur finally declares his preference for the Baroque fountain, whose fauns, "at rest in fulness of desire / For what is given," seem to promise that a complete happiness is possible on earth. And in poem after poem Wilbur finds new metaphors with which to assert that—to quote the title of his best-known poem—"Love Calls Us to the Things of This World." In "A Black November Turkey," he praises "the cocks that one by one, / Dawn after mortal dawn, with vulgar joy / Acclaim the sun"; in "After the Last Bulletins" the garbage-collectors, "saintlike men, / White and absorbed, with stick and bag remove / The litter of the night." The most famous of these emblems is the clean laundry of "Love Calls Us," in which the sight of sheets and smocks calls forth a secular prayer: "Oh, let there be nothing on earth but laundry, / Nothing but rosy hands in the rising steam / And clear dances done in the sight of heaven."

The profusion of such emblems in Wilbur's "Collected Poems" is more than just a proof of his talent for metaphor. It is the poetic fruit of his distinctive metaphysics, which deserves the old-fashioned name of Transcendentalist. The condition of metaphor is the capacity of things to be likened to one another; and for Wilbur this very capacity suggests that all things share the same essential nature. "I think that all poets are sending religious messages," he once declared, "because poetry is, in such great part, the comparison of one thing to another; or the saying, as in metaphor, that one thing *is* another. And to insist, as all poets do, that all things are related to each other, comparable to each other, is to go toward making an assertion of the unity of all things." This faith in what he calls, in a late poem, "the dovetailed world" is clearly inspired by Emerson, who wrote in "The Poet," "Things admit of being used as symbols because nature is a symbol, in the whole, and in every part."

This intuition provides Wilbur with his motive for metaphor: "What should we be without / The dolphin's arc, the dove's return, / These things in which we have seen ourselves and spoken?" And the happiest of Wilbur's many happy gifts is his confidence that we do, indeed, see ourselves in nature, that the human being is profoundly at home in this world. That confidence is what makes possible the hundreds upon hundreds of brilliant images and observations that light up Wilbur's "Collected Poems": "a still crepitant sound / Of the earth in the garden drinking / The late rain"; "Slow vultures kettling in the lofts of air"; "the shucked tunic of an onion, brushed / To one side on a backlit chopping-board / And rocked by trifling currents, prints and prints / Its bright, ribbed shadow like a flapping sail."

It is up to the "temperament and faith" of each reader to decide whether the golden world of Richard Wilbur's poetry is the real world. What is certain is that Wilbur has given his vision the permanence, the immediacy, and the conviction of major poetry. His "Collected Poems" has the same moving and ambiguous power that he ascribed, in an early poem, to yet another fountain, this one in "Caserta Garden":

> A childhood by this fountain wondering
> Would leave impress of circle-mysteries:
> One would have faith that the unjustest thing
> Had geometric grace past what one sees. ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

LOST BOYS

Why J. M. Barrie created Peter Pan.

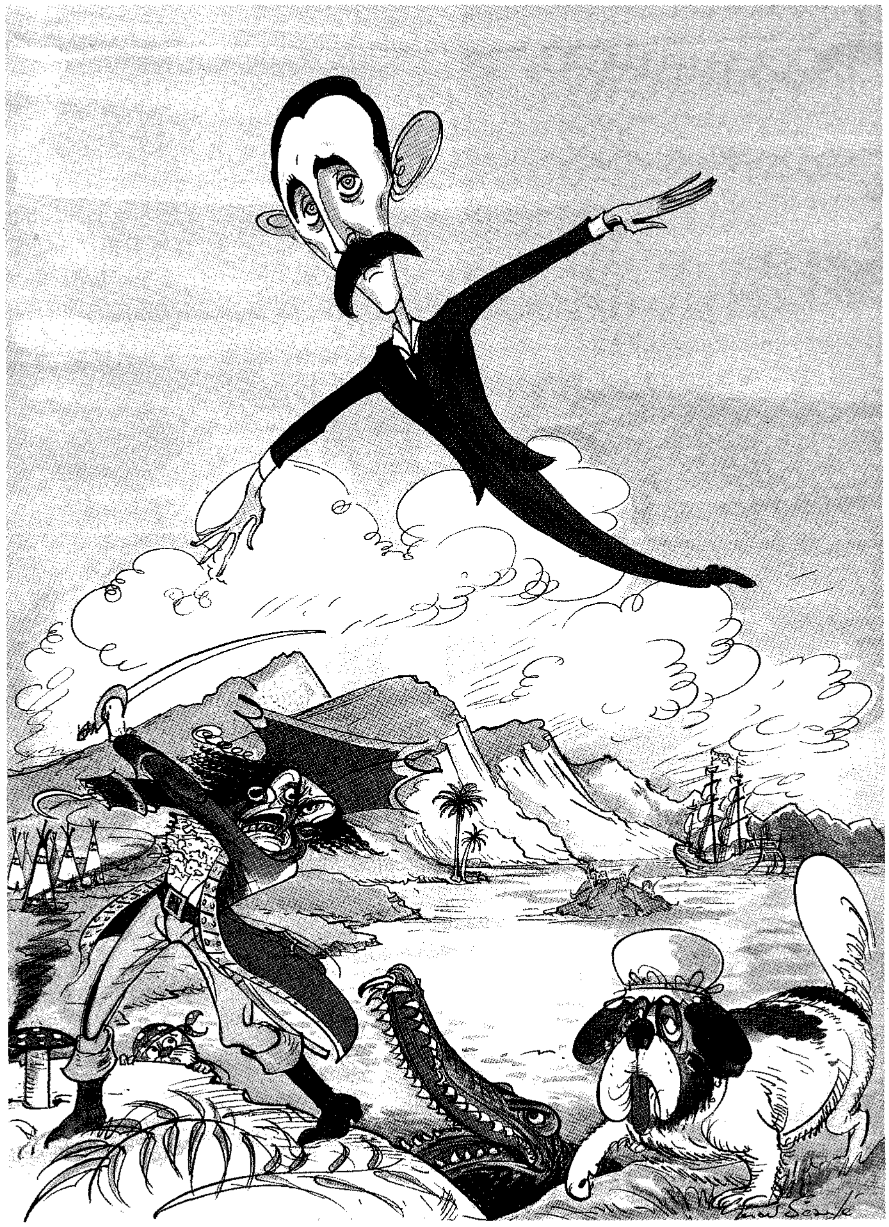
BY ANTHONY LANE

Almost a hundred years ago, at half past eight on the evening of December 27, 1904, the curtain went up at the Duke of York's Theatre, in London, to reveal, among other things, a man dressed as a dog. The man was an actor named Arthur Lupino, suffering for his art in a shaggy costume, and the dog was called Nana. Most plays enjoy a fitful life, at best, but we can be fairly sure that this winter grown men will once again drop on all fours and work up a canine sweat, while grown women will crop their hair, pull on green tights, and turn into temporary boys. The play is "Peter Pan," and, like its eponymous hero, it gives freakishly little sign of growing old.

The author was J. M. Barrie: Jimmy to some of his friends, and, in his later pomp, Sir James. He was short and slight, with bags under his eyes and a pale, protuberant brow, like a clever schoolboy who has stayed up late reading books under the bedclothes. He had a heavy mustache and a pipe smoker's percussive cough. Of humble origins, he grew rich, yet his choice of overcoat remained several sizes too large, as if he were wearing a father's hand-me-down. Both in face and in body—and, it became apparent, in the lineaments of his soul—Barrie seemed ill-suited to adult life, and those neat, child-friendly features sank all too readily into the caved-in sadness of old age.

Up to his death, in 1937, Barrie, as a result of his novels and plays, was one of the most famous men of his day; when Chaplin, on a trip to London in 1921, was asked whom he most wanted to meet, the answer was J. M. Barrie. Not even Barrie's ardent admirers, however, would have described him as a matinée idol, and he would have been wryly flattered to find himself reincarnated, for the centenary of "Peter Pan," in the beauteous person of Johnny Depp. A new film, entitled "Finding Neverland," tells the story—or a decorated version of the story—of J. M. Barrie and the circumstances under which Peter Pan leaped into existence. Depp resembles Barrie in no way, except in his slenderness of form. We get a passable, soft stab at a Scottish burr but no mustache; we see more of the sweet side of Barrie than the insidious flip side; and the harshest coughing in the film comes not from Depp but from Kate Winslet, who plays Barrie's friend Sylvia Llewellyn Davies.

Sylvia was one of a number of strong, rather Shakespearean female figures who ringed the life of Barrie—a dominance that began, unsurprisingly, with his mother. She was Margaret Ogilvy, a stonemason's daughter who hailed from a particularly hard outcrop of the Presbyterian Church. James was born in 1860, the son of Margaret and a weaver named Alexander Barrie, in the Scottish town of Kirriemuir, and, until the age of six, he played in the shadow of his gifted and handsome older brother, David. Then, in the winter of 1867, David was killed; he was hit by a fellow ice-skater, fell, and cracked his skull.



Barrie's play, like its eponymous hero, gives freakishly little sign of growing old.

Margaret took to her bed under the onslaught of grief, and young James was dispatched to offer comfort:

> The room was dark, and when I heard the door shut and no sound come from the bed I was afraid, and I stood still. I suppose I was breathing hard, or perhaps I was crying, for after a time I heard a listless voice that had never been listless before say, "Is that you?" I think the tone hurt me, for I made no answer, and then the voice said more anxiously "Is that you?" again. I thought it was the dead boy she was speaking to, and I said in a little lonely voice, "No, it's no' him, it's just me." Then I heard a cry, and my mother turned in bed, and though it was dark I knew that she was holding out her arms.

From here on, James worshipped his dead brother with a devotion that carried the taint of jealousy. Once, he even entered his mother's presence wearing a suit of David's clothes. The residue of the calamity, as it eventually seeped into Barrie's art, was the conviction that a perfect child who dies on the eve of his fourteenth birthday will be spared the degradation of growing up, and that the death will be outshone by the thought of the perfection—so blindingly, perhaps, that the boy will seem scarcely to have passed away at all.

We think of Barrie as one of the chief explorers—or, in a gloomier light, invaders—of childhood. Yet the childhood that gripped him most tightly was not his own but that of other people; it is almost as if his own did not exist. The souls around him were like books, ripe for perusal, and he preferred their opening chapters. Hence "Margaret Ogilvy" (1896), which in part is a memoir of his mother's youth. One of Barrie's biographers, Denis Mackail, calls it "that distressingly human and inhuman book," presumably because it demonstrates, even more than "Peter Pan," the weird twinning of Barrie's gifts—an almost telepathic self-spiriting into the emotions of others, and a professional shamelessness about baring them in public. Listen to his proud recital of Margaret Ogilvy's deprivations: "She was eight when her mother's death made her mistress of the house and mother to her little brother, and from that time she scrubbed and mended and baked and sewed." At once we see that image skipping the generations, from mother to son, and from the son to the Wendy of "Peter Pan," who was obliged, when she flew to Neverland and found a host of unclaimed children, to become a mother before her time.

GERALD SCARFE

The Barrie family—James was one of ten children, two of whom died in infancy—was ardently ambitious for its sons, the tool of that ambition was education, and Barrie duly studied at Dumfries Academy and at Edinburgh University. He emerged timid but industrious, and plowed a path into local and then national journalism. He moved to London, and, in 1887, produced his first novel, which bore the title "Better Dead." Within a few years, thanks largely to some sharp, rosy fictions set in Scotland and to "The Little Minister," a quaint tale of a minister who falls in love with a Gypsy, he had acquired not just a solid readership but a serious reputation; all of a sudden, we find him in correspondence with Thomas Hardy and Robert Louis Stevenson. He started writing for the theatre, kicking off with a parody of Ibsen, and indulging in the traditional sport of losing his heart to the leading ladies. His most acute biographer, Andrew Birkin—whose "J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys" has been granted a timely reissue (Yale; $18.95)—digs up some astounding entries from Barrie's private notebooks. Some are composed in the third person, as jottings toward a possible novel:

> —Greatest horror—dream I am married—wake up shrieking.
>
> —Even while proposing, the thought of how it wd *read* go thro' him.
>
> —He never has contact with a woman—If he had this might have made him exult less in making women love him.

In 1894, ignoring these self-cautions, Barrie married an actress named Mary Ansell, bestowing upon her, by way of a wedding present, a St. Bernard dog. The saga of Barrie is full of long-sufferers, the longest being Barrie himself, but nobody could follow its course and not spare a wealth of pity for Mary. Her husband loved many women, but the evidence suggests that the actual making of love lay outside his interests, or beyond his grasp. The creator of "Peter Pan" never had a child of his own. To us, the bewildering thing (and to Mary, surely the roughest insult) was that Barrie, far from burying his secret incapacities, dug them up like a pirate uncovering a treasure chest: "Grizel, I seem to be different from all other men; there seems to be

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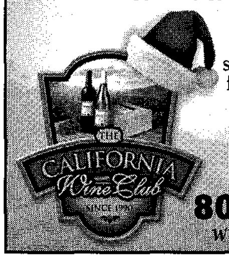

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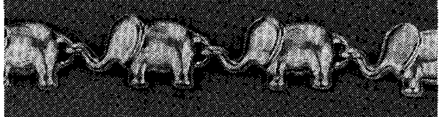

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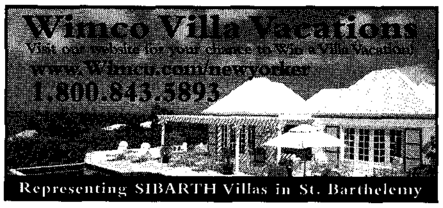

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some curse upon me.... You are the only woman I ever wanted to love, but apparently I can't." That comes from "Tommy and Grizel," the tale of a devastated marriage which was published six years into Barrie's own. At one point, the narrator says of Tommy, the fruitless husband, "He was a boy who could not grow up," adding, of Grizel, "He gave her all his affection, but his passion, like an outlaw, had ever to hunt alone." So where did the distinguished author like to hunt?

The answer is specific: Kensington Gardens, the broad, half-empty stretch of greenery next to Hyde Park. Here, in 1898, Barrie met a pair of boys, George and Jack Llewellyn Davies, aged five and four, who walked there with their nurse. They were amused by the small Scotsman with the enormous dog. Barrie talked with children, rather than at or down to them, and the meetings with George and Jack became drawn into the rhythm of their days. To our panicked eyes, such a relationship would be unthinkable—or, if thought about, nipped in the bud. We assume that a strange man, nearing forty, in a public place can offer only one thing to children still in knickerbockers, and that is harm. We would call the police, or, at least, call our children away. If we discovered the man to be a celebrity, we might call our lawyers, or, if we were feeling spiteful, the newspapers. And, if we were later to read what he wrote about our children, in an account so lightly ornamented as hardly to count as fiction, we might not be responsible for our actions:

> I returned to David, and asked him in a low voice whether he would give me a kiss. He shook his head about six times, and I was in despair. Then the smile came, and I knew that he was teasing me only. He now nodded his head about six times.
>
> That was the prettiest of all his exploits.

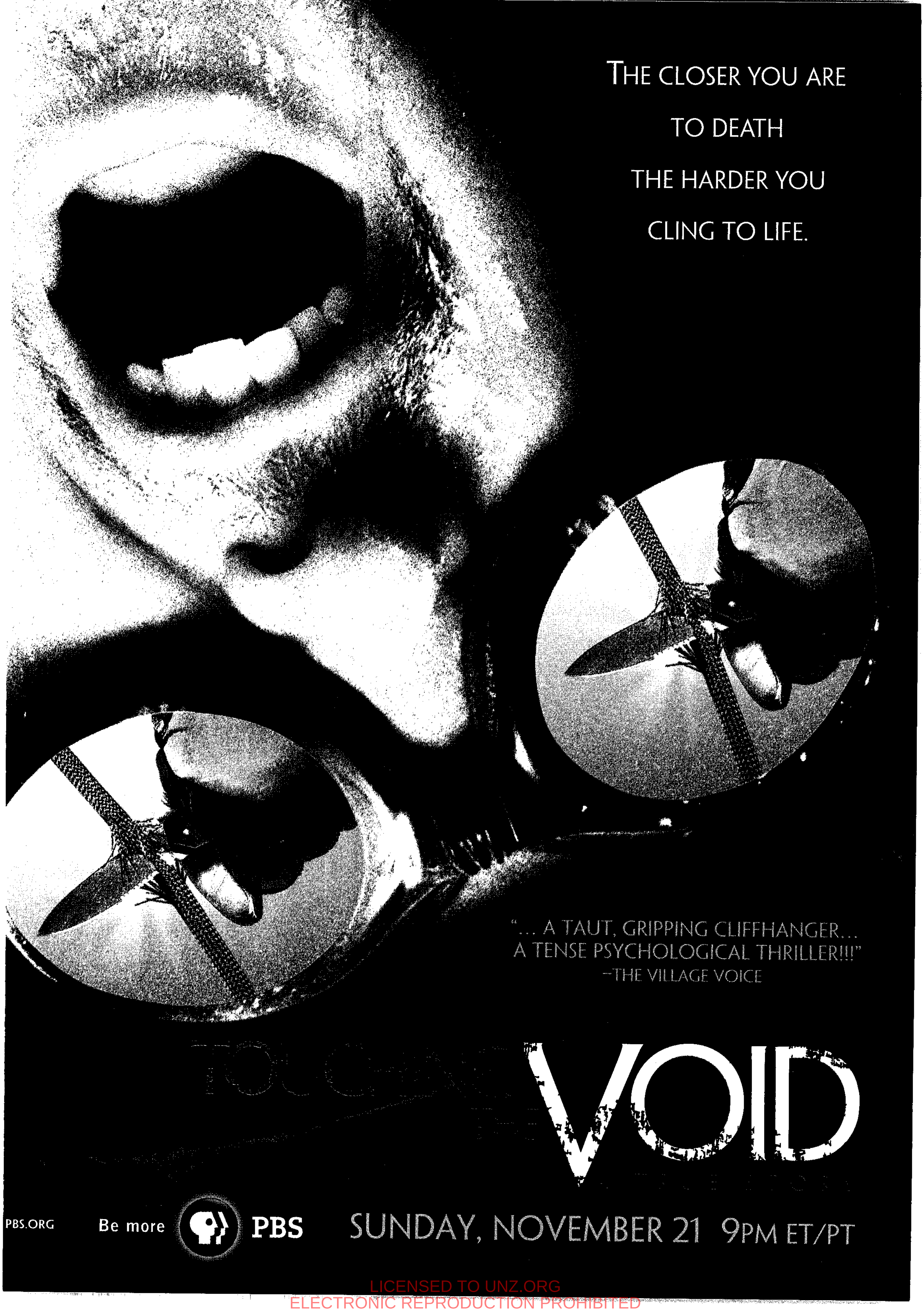
The tone of this, written in 1902, grates nastily on modern ears. Ever since "Lolita," we have realized that one of the pleasures of the child-seeker is not merely to play games with the victim but to pretend that the victim is complicit in that game, or even pulling the strings; thus is the burden of guilt shifted smoothly away from the raptor. Did readers of 1902 feel nothing of the sort, or are we the guilty party, unable to conjure a time when playfulness was its own reward, rather than an alibi or a ruse? The passage comes from "The Little White Bird," Barrie's half-disguised novel about George Llewellyn Davies. In the book, George becomes David—note the name of Barrie's dead brother—and is befriended by the bachelor narrator, who pretends to have a son of his own. This son, he then declares, has died (somewhere around here, the sheer weirdness of Barrie starts to multiply out of control), and he uses the nonexistent death to ingratiate himself further with David's parents. He is especially pleased that David's mother, Mary—note the name of Barrie's wife—is "culpably obtuse to my sinister design," the design being "to burrow under Mary's influence with the boy, expose her to him in all his vagaries, take him utterly from her and make him mine." Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you may retire to consider your verdict.

Yet the stubborn fact remains: J. M. Barrie was innocent. He no more sought sex from children than he did from women. Andrew Birkin, who knows more about Barrie than anybody else (the last Llewellyn Davies boy, Nico, having died in 1980), has arrived at the balanced conclusion that the author of "Peter Pan" was "a lover of childhood, but was not in any sexual sense the paedophile that some claim him to have been." His sinister design, it turns out, was not to corrupt boys with the murk of adult desire but to slough off any corruptions of his own, rejoin the unadulterated—the very word shows up the impurities in grownup life—and shrink once more, as best he could, into boyhood. This plan of Barrie's may have been creepy and pathetic, but it was not a crime, and, as weaknesses go, it may be the most widespread in the world, haunting every harassed male who lies awake and tells himself how much simpler everything was as a kid.

At the heart of "The Little White Bird" is a story that the narrator slowly invents not only for David's entertainment but with David's help. It is about a boy named Peter Pan, who lives in Kensington Gardens. The first name is a direct allusion to the fact that George Llewellyn Davies now had another brother, Peter, born in 1897. There would be two more: Michael, born in 1900, and Nicholas (or Nico), born in 1903; a sisterless five in all, rather than the four of "Finding Neverland." The film also opts for Peter Llewellyn Davies as the focus of Barrie's attention—a not unnatural choice, given his name, but the wrong one, for it was really the whole gang of them whom Barrie loved. If he had a favorite, it was Michael, but, as the notorious preface to "Peter Pan"—dedicated "To the Five"—explains, "I always knew that I made Peter by rubbing the five of you violently together, as savages with two sticks produce a flame.... That is all he is, the spark I got from you."

The course of the flame is a tricky one to trace, and what matters is that in Peter Pan Barrie achieved the rarest alchemy of all, the one that no writer can plan or predict: he invented a myth. The idea of Peter seems to have been flying around forever, a constant of humanity, and all that Barrie had to do was reach up and pluck the boy out of the air. After his first appearance, in "The Little White Bird," Peter outgrew the nest; the passages about him were revised and republished, with illustrations of delicate grotesquerie by Arthur Rackham, under the title "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens," in 1906. In the meantime, the play, after its London début, was triumphantly staged in New York in the winter of 1905. The novel we now think of as "Peter Pan" is actually called "Peter and Wendy," and it first saw the light in 1911. It is worth emphasizing that much of this material is close to unreadable—sometimes because it is sappy with sentiment but mostly because it is just too gnarled and knotted for current taste (increasing one's reverence for Rackham, who saw its warpings at once), let alone for that of our children. What on earth will they make, for instance, of the opening pages of the novel, in which Mr. and Mrs. Darling, Wendy's parents, are seen deciding whether they can afford to have more babies—literally adding up the doctors' fees for the infant diseases ("measles one five, German measles half a guinea") that they will be called upon to nurse?

Barrie would remonstrate severely on this point. He would claim that children cleave naturally to the misshapen and



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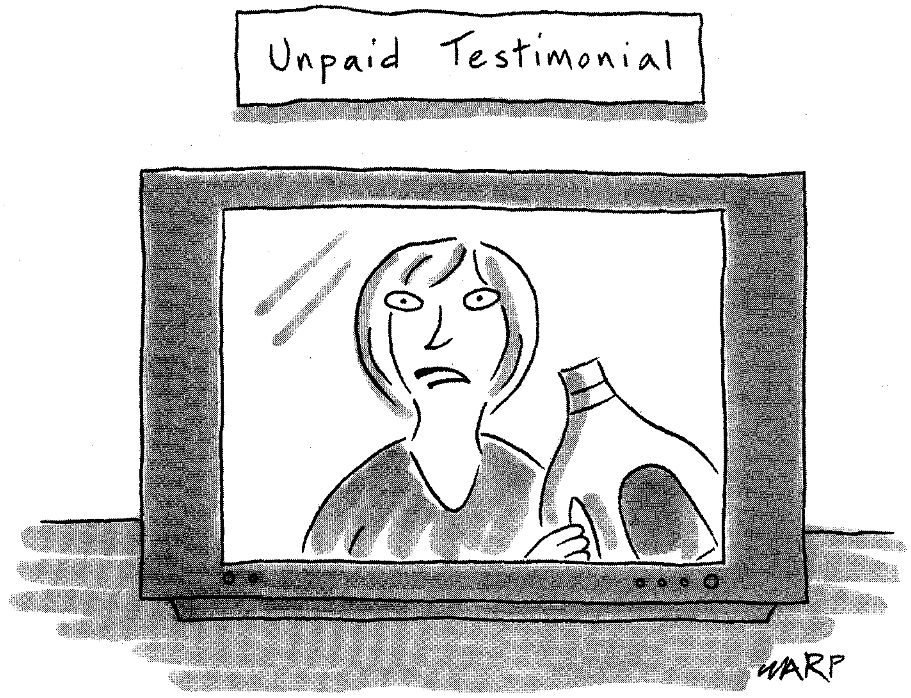

"This detergent sucks."

the morbid; like Roald Dahl, he admired the heartlessness and cunning of the young far more than he did their good behavior, and, for every mention of skipping fairies in "Peter Pan," there will be some dashed-off sketch of alarming and sanguinary malice. Look between the cracks of the play, in the stage directions, and you will find his prose hardening and cooling into casual sadism, as in this line about Tootles, one of the pirate boys in Neverland:

> He has been in fewer adventures than any of them because the big things constantly happen while he has stepped round the corner; he will go off, for instance, in some quiet hour to gather firewood, and then when he returns the others will be sweeping up the blood.

The most unfeeling child of all, needless to say, is Peter Pan himself. He flits through the play and the novels, and he has flitted through a century of stage productions and movies, and one result of those flittings is that we regard him as airy and innocuous. In truth, he is mean and green, a mini-monster of capering egotism; could there be any more dazzling proof of self-regard than a boy who first shows up in pursuit of his own shadow? In the early versions of the play, there is no Captain Hook, because there is no need for him; Peter supplies all the cruelty that is required. As "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens" makes clear, our hero escaped from his parents as a baby and, after much prevarication, decided to forsake them for the unwithering pleasure gardens of Kensington. He would fly back like a bird to watch his sleeping mother, but, once the decision was made, his way was barred—"When we reach the window it is Lock-out Time. The iron bars are up for life." Such is Peter's tragedy, but only because it was also his choice, and we should recall the terrifying title that Barrie appended to an early draft of the story: "The Boy Who Hated Mothers."

And what of the real mother? Sylvia Llewellyn Davies first met Barrie at a dinner party in 1897; as the evening progressed, she realized that he was the man who wiggled his eyebrows at her children in the park. This revelation seems to have charmed rather than offended her; Barrie and she would be intimate friends for the rest of her life. Kate Winslet, who plays Sylvia in "Finding Neverland," is ideal for the role, because she radiates that peculiar ease which starts to appear in photographs toward the end of the nineteenth century—no longer prim and straitened but open-faced, trusting, educated, and not without flickers of fire. In short, Sylvia (the daughter of a fast-witted literary clan, the du Mauriers) was altogether more modern than her husband, Arthur—scholar, lawyer, and stiff. Yet he, too, adored his boys, and it may be unfair of "Finding Neverland" to elide him, for streamlining purposes, from the scene; by the time that Johnny Depp meets Kate Winslet, she is already a widow, whereas Arthur was very much alive when Barrie first entered the consciousness—and, little by little, the home—of the Llewellyn Davies family. Soon, he was staying for tea, and then to wish the boys good night, and before long the Llewellyn Davieses were invited down to the Barries' house in the country for idyllic vacations. He began as Mr. Barrie the author, and grew into Uncle Jim. It was all too much for Barrie's wife, who, in the end, sought understandable consolation in the arms of another man; Barrie, in turn, sought a divorce, which was granted in 1909.

"Finding Neverland" is a weepie, and some viewers will mock it on that score, but it needs to be defended. First, because these days a good weepie is hard to find. And, second, because there is so much to weep about—far more, in fact, than you would gather from the film, which closes decorously after the death of Sylvia. (If you want a more accurate and leisurely testament, you could go online and order the DVD of "J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys"—a wonderful TV drama, written by Andrew Birkin and running to four and a half hours, that the BBC produced in 1978, with Ian Holm providing the definitive Barrie.) From the moment that Barrie met George and Jack, and started to ponder the means by which they might be rendered immortal, the story becomes a dismal catalogue of mortality:

1907—Arthur Llewellyn Davies dies from cancer of the jaw.

1910—Sylvia dies of lung cancer. The five boys are orphaned; Barrie is made their guardian.

1915—George is killed in the First World War, fighting with his regiment in Flanders.

1921—Michael, an undergraduate at Oxford, is drowned while swimming with a friend. The two bodies, when recovered, are found clinging together.

All of this was enough to wreck Barrie, or, at least, to throw intolerable shadows over the remainder of his life. Few of his works, aside from "Peter Pan" and his desert-island comedy of class conflict, "The Admirable Crichton," are remembered now, yet in 1922 he was invested with the Order of Merit, the grandest of British honors. He died in 1937, and we should be thankful that he didn't live to be a hundred, and so to witness the terrible final act. On April 5, 1960, Peter Llewellyn Davies, by then an esteemed publisher, threw himself under a subway train in London. We should not presume to read a mind in torment, but we may note in passing that, if he had lived another month, he would have reached the centenary of Barrie's birth and thus, one imagines, a fresh flurry of interest in "Peter Pan"—"that terrible masterpiece," in the words of Peter Llewellyn Davies. His numerous comments on the genesis of the work, as quoted in Janet Dunbar's 1970 biography of Barrie, are judicious, amused, and apparently unperturbed. But the effect of "Peter Pan" was like that of those iron bars on the hero's family home; it is a kind of prison drama played onstage as a slice of festive cheer, and it locked the Llewellyn Davies boys into the garden of pre-puberty as surely as Pan himself is locked out from his mother's embrace.

Does that make Barrie the bringer of mischance, after all? Peter "is never touched by any one in the play," a stage direction in "Peter Pan" reads, and Barrie never touched his young charges—as Peter Llewellyn Davies confirmed—with anything more than affection. Once Arthur and Sylvia had died, Barrie, in loco parentis, fulfilled his duties with diligence and pride. But the damage, unwitting as it was, had been done long before, not by Barrie the middle-aged man but by Barrie the successful author; in making the Five the tinder for Peter Pan, he treated them as ideal spirits made flesh, and no child should be freighted with such an embarrassing burden. Their innocence was imperilled from the moment that it became prime-quality material for his elaborate public fantasies, and there may never have been a more desperate or acquisitive dedication than the one at the start of "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens": "To Sylvia and Arthur Llewellyn Davies and their boys (my boys)."

Barrie was a wounded creature, from his earliest youth, and his probing of that wound is what makes "Peter Pan" so enduringly painful to read. Toward the end of the novel, an immutable Peter drops in to find the adult Wendy, now a mother herself, as if he were the ghost of David Barrie, still cold from that skating accident, alighting beside Margaret Ogilvy. The tensions are bald and excruciating:

> He was a little boy, and she was grown up. She huddled by the fire not daring to move, helpless and guilty, a big woman.
>
> "Hullo, Wendy," he said, not noticing any difference, for he was thinking chiefly of himself; and in the dim light her white dress might have been the nightgown in which he had seen her first.
>
> "Hullo, Peter," she replied faintly, squeezing herself as small as possible. Something inside of her was crying, "Woman, woman, let go of me."

Is this really the stuff of classic children's fiction? Do people still read "Peter Pan," or has Peter shrunk to a brand by now, a chirping Disney figure wrenched from the unsettling landscapes where he originally appeared? If so, he demands restitution, for he sprang from the mind of an oddball, and he is not alone. Consider Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, and J. M. Barrie: the stammerer with the camera, the wandering epileptic, and the coughing frequenter of playgrounds. The great dreamers of English children's literature were not, as it happens, dreamy types at all but exacting, even pedantic, in the dramatizing of their fathomless unhappiness. If their characters are pricked by a helpless urge to travel—down a rabbit hole, to sea in a sieve, second star to the right and straight on till morning—it is because there is always something, a drab existence or a dreadful past, that begs to be fled. Open a page of "Harry Potter," by contrast, and you know that it was written by a clever, funny woman of sound mind, with a keen commercial eye and a Barrie-like love of the fizzing narratives for which children naturally thirst; but there is nothing smarting beneath, no ominous beat of the heartsick. Harry will grow up, and we think it only proper that he should; but will he continue to taunt and haunt us, a hundred years from now, like the boy who never did? ♦

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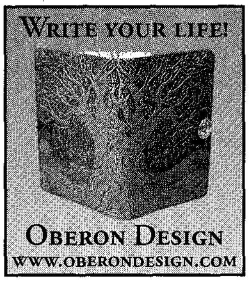
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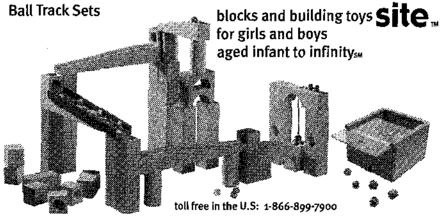
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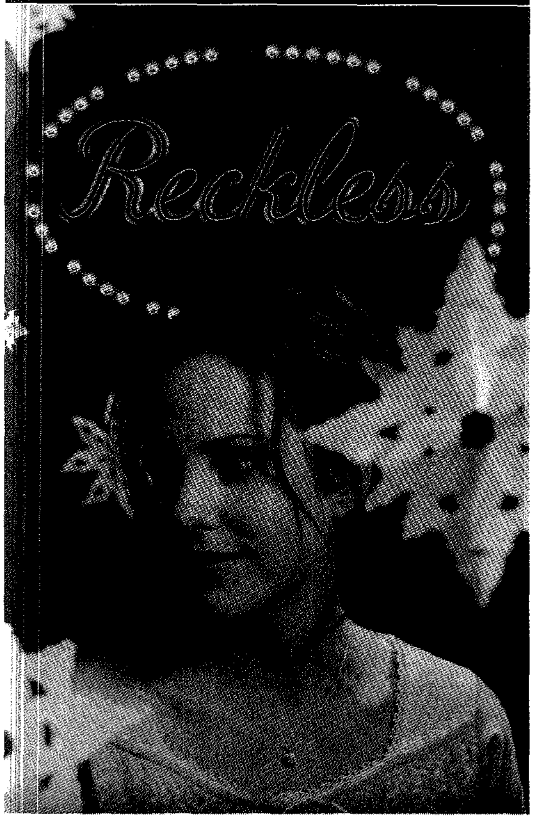

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THE ART WORLD

THE CHARMER

Young Raphael, in London.

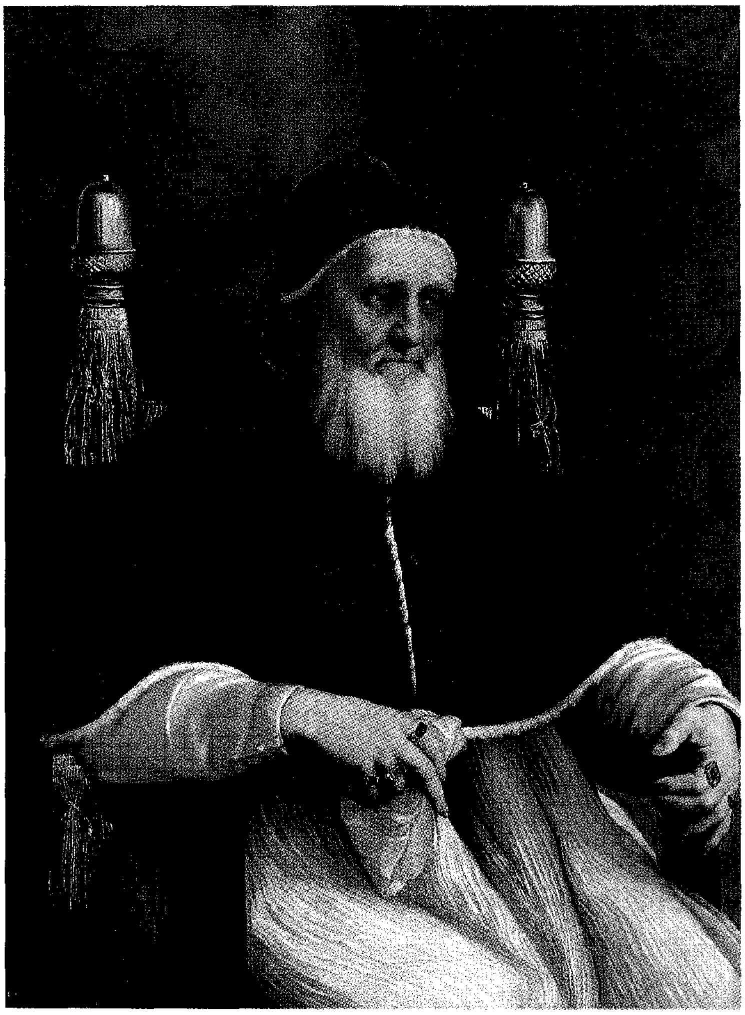
BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

"What he had of art, he had from me," Michelangelo complained of Raphael, whose early career, from 1500 to 1513, is the subject of an enticing exhibition, "Raphael: From Urbino to Rome," at the National Gallery in London. Michelangelo, who was eight years older than his contemporary but survived him by forty-four years—Raphael died on his thirty-seventh birthday, in 1520—thus claimed first place in what could have been a long line of miffed masters. "Influence" scarcely covers the relation to Raphael's work not only of Michelangelo and the other titan of the High Renaissance, Leonardo, but also of Raphael's father, Giovanni Santi; Perugino, who may have been his teacher; Pinturicchio; and Fra Bartolommeo. The show, which incorporates works by most of those elders, demonstrates that the prodigy from the Marches extracted the formal essence of each man's art to feed a synthetic style that would become a beau ideal of Western painting for the next four centuries. Raphael was preternaturally talented in all elements of picture-making, afire with ambition, and so charming that no one, be it a colleague, a mistress, or a Pope, could do enough for him. I don't like him. I fairly swoon before his best paintings—including, in the show, the "Alba Madonna" (1509-11), "Portrait of Pope Julius II" (1511), and "Portrait of La Velata" (1512-13)—but his perfectionism has something callow at its core. His relative neglect since the late nineteenth century, when the academic tastes that exalted him succumbed to the sterner inclinations of modern art, is no more than a trifle unfair.

An only child, Raphael was breast-fed by his mother—this was unusual for the time—at the behest of Santi, an accomplished poet and courtier as well as painter, who was determined to shield his son from the low company of peasant wet nurses and their kind. (The young Michelangelo had suffered and, ultimately, profited from just such rough society.) Raphael's childhood, though marred by his mother's death, when he was eight, was sheltered, rich in aristocratic culture, and industrious. He was assisting in his father's workshop at the age of eleven, when Santi died. Entrusted to an uncle, he obviously thrived. The show opens with a startlingly adept and subtle self-portrait drawing from his adolescence, which depicts a clear-eyed, self-consciously irresistible boy. Equally precocious paintings from the same period, though rather forced in their prescribed religious content, conquer the style—sharply contoured active figures in atmospheric landscapes, sumptuously colored—of Perugino, then the leading painter of Central Italy. (Raphael's practical edge, from the start, was a yeoman's approach to preparation, proceeding through many drawings to fully resolved cartoons that were transferred to surfaces, usually wood, for painting. Other artists worked this way, but none more pertinaciously.) At the same time, Raphael not only absorbed the decorative grandeur of history paintings by Pinturicchio but provided that artist, almost thirty years his senior, with designs for major frescoes in Siena.

In 1504, at the age of twenty-one, Raphael arrived in Florence to take on Michelangelo and Leonardo, who were both working there. Perugino's manner vanished from Raphael's style, which soon displayed Leonardo's "chromatic unity, interlocking gazes, and pyramidal composition," in the accurate judgment of the art historian David Drogin. A portrait drawing from 1505-06 closely follows the "Mona Lisa" (1503-06), complete with a game approximation of the dumbfounding smile. Raphael added sugar to Leonardo's recipes, softening craggy landscapes into beamish vistas and demystifying shadows with warm tones. Meanwhile, Michelangelo's twisting, contrapposto figuration invaded Raphael's pictures, sometimes directly. He copied a stretching Christ child from a Michelangelo relief and, with adjustments, popped it into the "Bridgewater Madonna" (about 1507). (In how many endearing ways can a naked baby disport itself on a mother's lap? The Renaissance counted them.) And a dashing, ever so slightly epicene drawing after the sculptor's "David" bespeaks less inspiration than light-fingered grand theft. Gravitas falls away, leaving gladness in finely muscled, limber flesh. Raphael passed every subject through the filter of his self-contentment.

In 1508, it was on to Rome, where Michelangelo was starting to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel—and would never forgive the architect Bramante, his friend, for allowing the young challenger a sneak peek at the work-in-progress. Raphael applied what he had seen to become the premier decorator of the Vatican. In that role, he went on to produce frescoes and tapestry cartoons (which are outside the scope of the London show) that counteract most misgivings about him, including mine. Those works realize a genius for architecturally integrated design—mighty compositions of vivacious figures in deep space, appearing to expand the real area of a room—which constitutes Raphael's original, sadly truncated, contribution to art. It hardly matters that much of the actual painting was done by assistants: the pictures' majesty is chiefly a feat of organizational intelligence. Having inherited Bramante's position as the Pope's head architect, Raphael might today be at least as famous a designer as a painter but for his premature death. He had it in him to outgrow the simpering allure for which we are obliged to remember him. As it is, the powerful composition and exquisite color of the circular "Alba Madonna," from the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.—in freshly restored mint condition—must compete with the longueurs of cutely manly toddlers (Jesus and John the Baptist) and a Virgin decked out in racy chic, which, as a religious painting, is an epicurean travesty. (The English Pre-Raphaelites of the nineteenth century quixotically sought to restore painting to the point before Raphael "ceased to be a truly Christian painter," in the words of the art historian Nicholas Penny.)


Raphael's "Portrait of Pope Julius II" (1511).

COURTESY NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

Rome fell hard for Raphael's charisma. Vasari summarized his greatness this way: "Nature sent Raphael into the world after it had been vanquished by the art of Michelangelo and was ready, through Raphael, to be vanquished by character as well." Raphael's "gentle humanity" was unsullied by the "touch of uncouthness and even madness" that marks most artists. He "was never seen leaving his house to go to court but that he was accompanied by fifty painters, all able and excellent artists, going with him to do him honor." He was a confirmed lover. Vasari writes that the only way one patron could get Raphael to finish a commission was by moving his mistress into quarters at the site. (Picasso made a late series of lyrically pornographic etchings in which Raphael and his amour engage in necessarily acrobatic congress, given that he never lets go of his palette and brushes.) Vasari gives as the cause of Raphael's death a fever enkindled by too much sex. Pope Leo X, who succeeded Julius in 1513, "wept bitterly" at his passing. Vasari exclaims, "When this noble craftsman died, the art of painting might well have died with him; for when Raphael closed his eyes, painting was left as if blind." It was left with an untenable model, certainly.

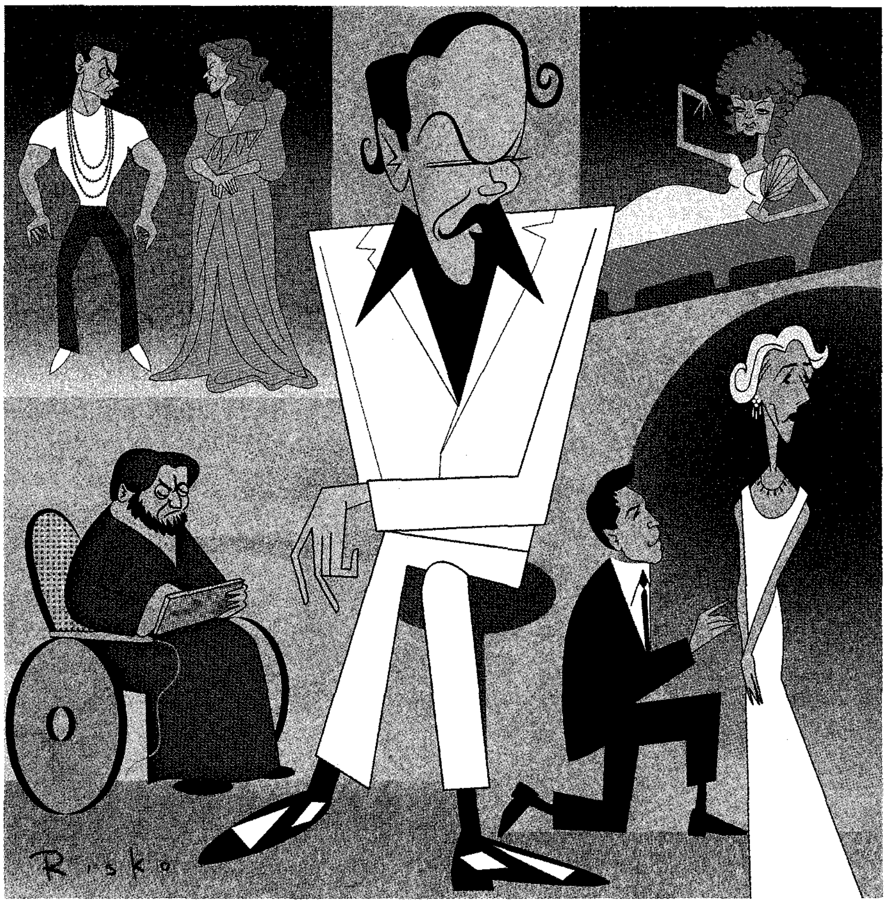
For me, Raphael's version of the beautiful is the sublime of the pretty: sheer comeliness, to the *n*th power. His paintings lack the element of reverent awe that informs beauty. They are about liking, albeit intense liking, rather than love. In this, Raphael was less a creator of the Italian Renaissance than its definitive human creation, a demigod whose capacities rivalled those of the divine. It's perfect that Leo X evidently planned to make this skirt chaser a cardinal. That was the historic moment when the profligate amorality of Rome, financed by the sale of what amounted to get-out-of-Purgatory-free passes to the faithful, brought on the Reformation. (Luther posted his "Ninety-five Theses upon Indulgences" two and a half years before Raphael's death.) The next youthful phenomenon of Italian painting, Parmigianino (1503-40), trying to square Raphaelite pleasures with the time's mounting religious and political anxieties, kicked off the long, floundering hysteria of Mannerism. There would never again be anyone like Raphael—as his more alert contemporaries must have sensed—because never again would a fully developed, energetic, urbane culture coast on a tide of such complacent aplomb. ♦

THE THEATRE

SOUL SKETCHES

Tennessee Williams's unknown one-acts.

BY JOHN LAHR



The evening's characters emerge like apparitions around Jeremy Lawrence as Williams.

ROBERT RISKO

By his own admission, Tennessee Williams was a hysteric; his œuvre is perhaps the world's greatest testament to the hysteric's autoeroticism. "For love I make characters," he said. Williams's involvement with his fantasy world was so intense that sometimes, according to his friend Gore Vidal, who on occasion wrote in the same room with him, he would react out loud to the events taking shape on his typewriter. At the opening of "Five by Tenn" (at City Center), an evening of short plays, two of which have never been staged, Williams (Jeremy Lawrence) stands in front of the audience and drawls, "My characters build the play about them like spiders weaving their webs, sea creatures making their shells." Lawrence, identified in the program coyly as "The Writer," is an eerie simulacrum of Williams: the lidded, tired eyes; the mustache; the tousled hair; the diminutive body housing a poetic dynamo. As Williams speaks, the characters of the evening emerge around him like apparitions, echo a few lines from their respective plays, then disappear. The staging shrewdly suggests the nature of Williams's hauntedness and of his playwriting: a sort of séance in which the author channels both himself and the projections of others. Williams introduces each new scene, and sometimes he even puts a prop in place before getting out of the way and letting his inventions take over. This visual trope has the effect of making the plays seem like autobiographical soundings, which, of course, they are. "I begin with a character in a situation—a vague one," he said. "The process generally parallels a mood I am in. If I have a problem, I invent people in parallel circumstances, create parallel tensions. It is my way of working out problems." His plays, therefore, are forever taking his moral and emotional temperature; they are the chronological fever chart of his tormented soul.

Last year, Hartford Stage mounted "8 by Tenn," an excellent two-part compilation of the most literary and accomplished of Williams's one-acts, including his late comic tour de force "The Gnädiges Fräulein." In this collection, well conceived by the director Michael Kahn, who originated the show with the Shakespeare Theatre, in Washington, where he is the artistic director, the plays are not first-rate but finger exercises, which nonetheless have a powerful appeal. The novelty of the evening is to encounter Williams working to define his subject matter and his attack; the masterstrokes are visible and often thrilling, and almost all the subjects are brought to fleeting but compelling life.

The first play, "Summer at the Lake," which was written in 1937, before Williams had left his St. Louis home and claimed both his emotional and his literary destiny, shows the young author contemplating his restlessness and the toxic love of his overbearing and manipulative mother, whose pretensions and puritanism he teased by often referring to her as "Miss Edwina." "You don't have to go rushing off every time I open my mouth to say something," Mrs. Fenway says, rebuking her teen-age son, Donald (Cameron Folmar), from the chaise longue where she lies enervated by the heat and by the news that her husband wants to enforce economies that will require the sale of their summer house and the cancellation of Donald's plans for college. (Williams's father, Cornelius, a shoe-company executive, made him quit college in his third year to take up a job in the company warehouse.) He wants to go swimming; she sees him merely as an extension of her desires. "You're out there too much," she says. "You leave me alone all the time, and I don't know where you are." Penny Fuller, as Mrs. Fenway, is a handsome woman, and she expertly captures Edwina's beauty, her seductiveness, and her spoiled childish nature. (Edwina was, according to Williams, "an almost criminally foolish woman.") For all her apparent concern about Donald—his lack of friends, his dreaminess, his need to be normal and strong—the most telling autobiographical aspect of the play is that Mrs. Fenway narrates her love for Donald, but she doesn't touch him. She is entirely self-absorbed: the manifestations of her own hysterical nature—headaches, crying, and, particularly, fainting over money issues (one of Edwina's specialties)—demonstrate skillfully how the hysteric turns herself into an event and forces her inner life into others. Donald's psychic space is entirely colonized by his mother's neediness. "Me lying helpless with a splitting head and you just floating off into space," she says at one point, when her son's mind wanders. Fuller has a lot of mischievous fun suggesting the infantile in Mrs. Fenway; she squeals like a baby over a blister on the ball of her foot. Many of Williams's plays from this period—"Not About Nightingales," "Stairs to the Roof," especially "The Glass Menagerie"—end with the hero making a dramatic escape from his "two-by-four situation," as Tom Wingfield calls the suffocation of his home life in "The Glass Menagerie" (1944). Donald is an early snapshot of Tom, for whom home is also "a hideous trap." He goes swimming and keeps swimming. His mother scans the horizon and can't bear to keep looking. "Has Donald come back to shore yet?" she asks the maid, who indicts her with a glance. "No," the maid says. "He didn't come back."

Sex, not literature, finally engineered Williams's liberation from family and from his woefully prolonged emotional adolescence. He didn't have homosexual sex, he claimed, until he was twenty-eight; he didn't masturbate until he was twenty-seven. "I didn't know what such a thing was," he told *Playboy*. "Well, I'd heard of it, but it never occurred to me to practice it." Sex brought Williams down to earth and into life. "The Fat Man's Wife" (1938) is a jejune sketch that meditates on unfulfilled desire before Williams had risked fulfilling his own. In this heterosexual fantasy, awash with false emotion and bad writing, Vera Cartwright (Kathleen Chalfant), the wife of a fat and philandering theatrical producer, Josie (David Rasche), is given a shot at a new life in the shape of her husband's author, the young playwright (Robert Sella), who is going abroad and wants her to accompany him. "I'm offering you your chance to be really alive for a change," he says. "Won't you take it?" Of the many improbabilities in this sketch, the greatest is the strutting, Noël Coward-like show of pseudo-sophistication.

"And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens," however, which Williams wrote, in the late fifties, in a camp voice that he sometimes used in his letters and almost never in his plays, is a rare and fascinating portrait of a nervy New Orleans property owner and transvestite, Candy Delaney (Cameron Folmar), as he tries to seduce a loutish, hard-drinking sailor, Karl (the cartoonish Myk Watford), first with words, then with booze, and, finally, with money. Folmar is a sensational whirlwind of persiflage and panic as Candy lures Karl into his lost life. "You want to be laid, and you won't be, not by me," Karl tells Candy, who tries to become the object of his heterosexual desire by getting into blond drag. "Are you crazy?" Karl asks. "No, just very abnormal, I guess," Candy says, with punishing earnestness. The play traps something essential about the pervert: his attempt to export delusional internal scenes into reality. Karl beats, abuses, and steals from Candy, but Candy's omnipotent fantasy continues to see Karl as some kind of steadfast partner whom he has chosen. "I want to have some dignity in my life, and now I have found a person that I can live with on a dignified basis and on a permanent basis, who won't compromise me in my professional life," Candy tells one of the gay men who live upstairs, and who later finds him nearly kicked to death by Karl.

The sorrow that ends "And Tell Sad Stories"—Candy and his gay neighbors giggle and cry as the curtain falls—has hardened into bedrock suffering in "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow" (1970), in which a man (the compelling David Rasche) and a woman (the expert Kathleen Chalfant), who are best friends, try to reach out to each other in their moment of pain. "Dragon Country, the country of pain, is as an uninhabitable country which is inhabited, though," Chalfant says. She is ill but tries to contain her pain; he, like Williams during this period, which he called his "Stoned Age," is depressed and almost unable to speak. The characters move around each other in poignant stutter steps of grief; they are two solitaries attempting to bridge what Williams called "the little cave of consciousness" and to somehow comfort each other. The mysterious play has Williams's heartbroken music; in the accident of the characters' survival, it is a moment of grace where words rap out what Williams called "a code message on the walls of prisons." ♦

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THE BACK PAGE BY BRUCE McCALL

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You can sing whatever you like. We just want to get an idea of whether you would embrace being in Canada strongly enough that you'd still be here in a few years, so our health-care system could prepare your free hospital bed.

6. **I am fully prepared to** (*check all that apply*): Spell "color" "colour" and "check" "cheque"___ Observe Boxing Day___ Switch over to the metric system___ Not laugh when somebody says "Medicine Hat," "Moose Jaw," or "Coboconk"___
These are just for-instances meant to gauge the chances of your assimilating. If you want to stick to your American way of handling these things, that's perfectly all right. One thing about Canada: everybody says that our tolerant attitude "just knocks them out."

7. **In leaving the U.S. to reside elsewhere, I also considered:** Belgium___ St.-Pierre & Miquelon___ New Zealand___ Norway___
Don't worry. It won't hurt our feelings if your first choice for emigration was not Canada. These are all fine places, and we don't have a monopoly on livability. This information will be used only by our diplomatic corps to make compliments in Christmas cards to accredited representatives of these nations, e.g., "Incidentally, XX Americans have told us they preferred your place to ours!"

8. **Translate the following statement:** "Cripes, grade thirteen! Here's a loonie—buy a Coffee Crisp, eh?"
This is really just practice for when or if you come here to live; best to get used to the idea that even if Canadian language isn't really distinctive, like, say, Hungarian or Finnish, we do sometimes use funny-sounding words and phrases, so "forewarned is forearmed"!

9. **Immigrants must acknowledge having read this section by signing below where indicated.**
Canada is a pretty nice country, but it is not perfect by any stretch: Winters can be long and quite cold. There's not much to do on Sundays. Hugging and kissing in public is frowned upon. You can't deduct mortgage interest on your taxes.
I have read the above *(sign here)* ________________________

10. **Are you absolutely certain that you want to come up here to live?** All this is food for thought.___ I hadn't looked at it that way.___ Maybe I need to do more research.___ Can I postpone my application without losing my place in line?___
Suggestion: find the home phone number of a random Canadian resident and give him or her a call—preferably after dinner. He or she would be delighted to chat. Half an hour of heart-to-heart conversation just might "do the trick" in helping you decide Yea or Nay about emigrating. (If Yea, you can bill the Canadian government for the cost of your call within thirty days of arrival.)

Cancellation of Application for Canadian Residence

I, ________, hereby withdraw my application to be accepted as a landed immigrant to Canada. Signed: ________ Date: ___/___/___

Don't be embarrassed about changing your mind. In fact, fewer than sixty-three per cent of all applications for Canadian residence are followed to completion. It's always nice when people can work out their problems without taking drastic measures and moving lock, stock, and barrel to another country. "Better safe than sorry!" We are glad that cooler heads prevailed. And you're always welcome to visit!

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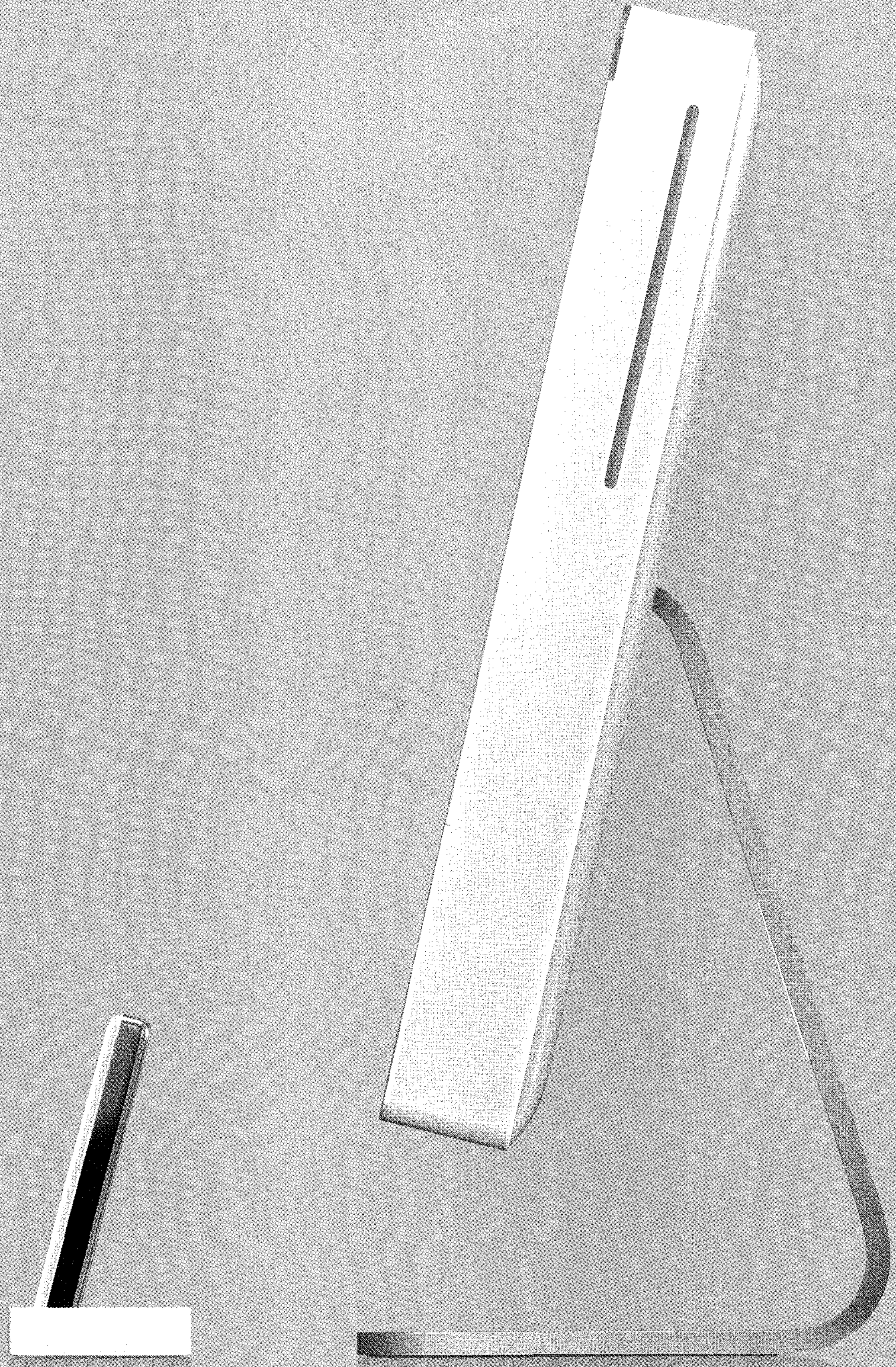

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